

**CIHM  
Microfiche  
Series  
(Monographs)**

**ICMH  
Collection de  
microfiches  
(monographies)**



**Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques**

**© 1995**

# Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming, are checked below.

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- ☒ Coloured covers/  
Couverture de couleur
- ☐ Covers damaged/  
Couverture endommagée
- ☐ Covers restored and/or laminated/  
Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- ☐ Cover title missing/  
Le titre de couverture manque
- ☐ Coloured maps/  
Cartes géographiques en couleur
- ☒ Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black)/  
Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- ☒ Coloured plates and/or illustrations/  
Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- ☐ Bound with other material/  
Relié avec d'autres documents
- ☐ Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion  
along interior margin/  
La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la  
distorsion le long de la marge intérieure
- ☐ Blank leaves added during restoration may appear  
within the text. Whenever possible, these have  
been omitted from filming/  
Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées  
lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte,  
mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont  
pas été filmées.

- ☐ Coloured pages/  
Pages de couleur
- ☐ Pages damaged/  
Pages endommagées
- ☐ Pages restored and/or laminated/  
Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- ☒ Pages discoloured, stained or foxed/  
Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- ☐ Pages detached/  
Pages détachées
- ☒ Showthrough/  
Transparence
- ☐ Quality of print varies/  
Qualité inégale de l'impression
- ☐ Continuous pagination/  
Pagination continue
- ☐ Includes index(es)/  
Comprend un (des) index

Title on header taken from: /  
Le titre de l'en-tête provient:

- ☐ Title page of issue/  
Page de titre de la livraison
- ☐ Caption of issue/  
Titre de départ de la livraison
- ☐ Masthead/  
Générique (périodiques) de la livraison

- ☐ Additional comments: /  
Commentaires supplémentaires:

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below /  
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10X	12X	14X	16X	18X	20X	22X	24X	26X	28X	30X	32X
						✓					

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

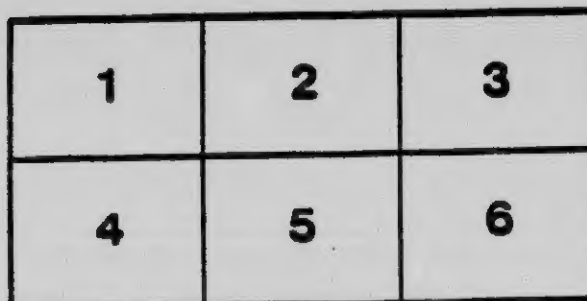
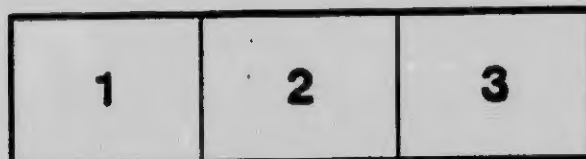
National Library of Canada

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol  $\longrightarrow$  (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol  $\nabla$  (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

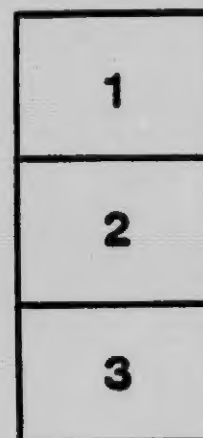
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

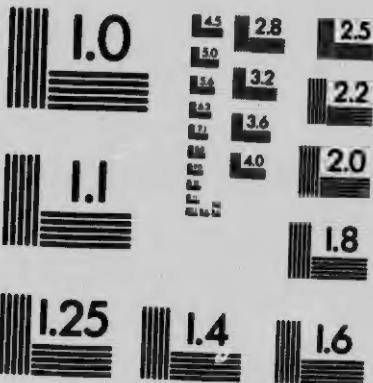
Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole  $\longrightarrow$  signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole  $\nabla$  signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482-0300 - Phone  
(716) 288-5989 - Fax

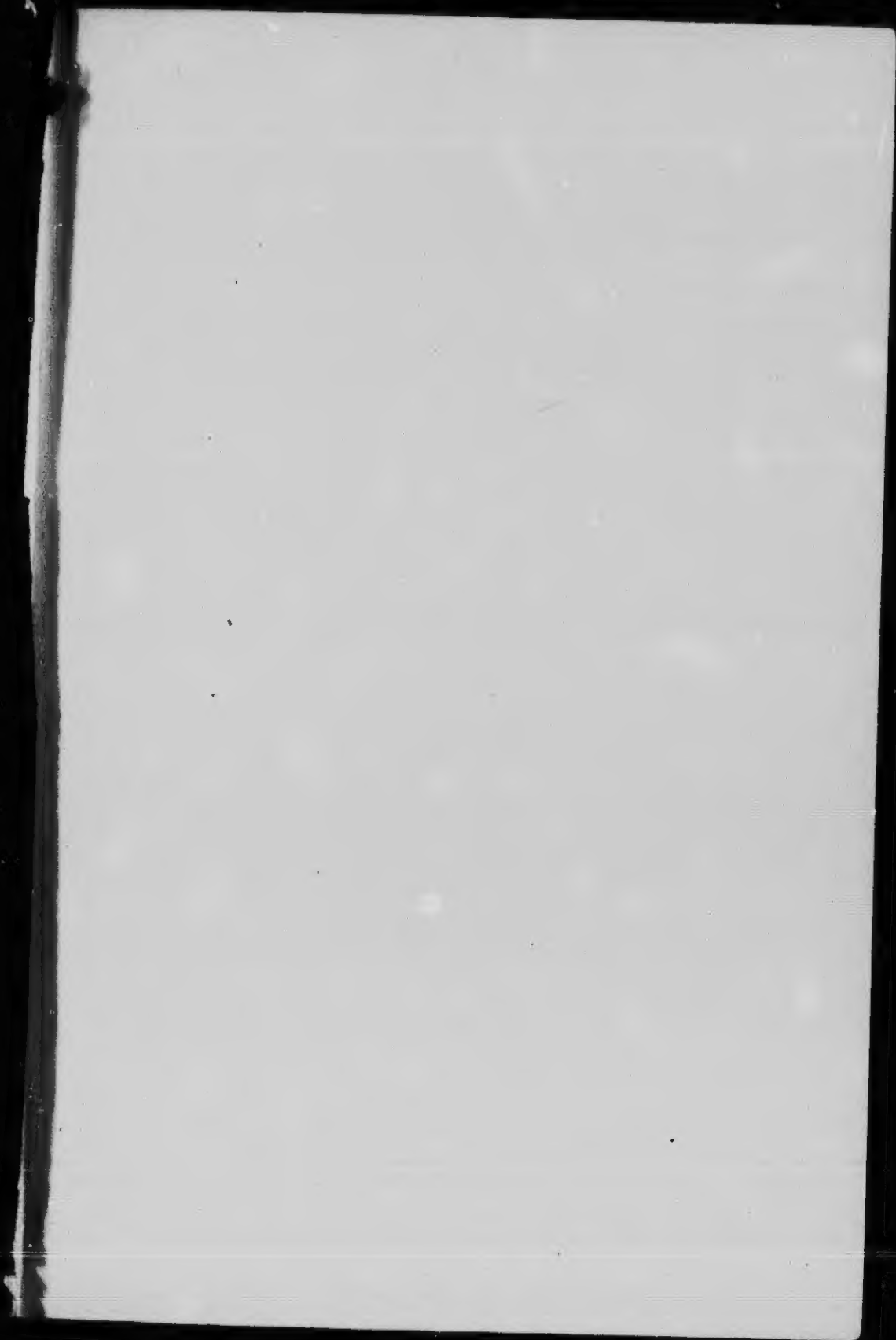


# A MODERN APOLLOS



Robert McIntyre







8.00

# A MODERN APOLLOS

By ROBERT McINTYRE

Author of "At Early Candle-light"



WILLIAM BRIGGS  
TORONTO

PS2359

M35

M6

Cincinnati

JENNINGS & PYE  
Chicago

Kansas City

EATON & MAINS  
New York



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE COMRADES QUARREL . . . . .	5
II. THE SPECTER OF THE MILL . . . . .	21
III. THE HOME OF THE ROMANS . . . . .	38
IV. PRISON DOORS ARE OPENED . . . . .	54
V. LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM . . . . .	64
VI. HOW THE MEDAL WAS WON . . . . .	81
VII. BEVERLY AT THE CONFERENCE . . . . .	101
VIII. IN BIRKEY'S STORE . . . . .	112
IX. THE FIRST SERMON . . . . .	125
X. A BATTLE WITH GHOULS . . . . .	133
XI. THE MAJOR IS REJECTED . . . . .	145
XII. THE PREACHER IN PERIL . . . . .	161
XIII. "THE MINTY" IS CAPTURED . . . . .	175
XIV. A STOLEN LETTER . . . . .	192
XV. SINNER McLAW SPEAKS . . . . .	208
XVI. AN OUTLAW'S DEATH . . . . .	220

## Contents

	PAGE
XVII. A SOUL'S STRUGGLE . . . . .	227
XVIII. THE CRIMINALS ARE TAKEN . . . . .	240
XIX. THE COLONEL IS RESTORED . . . . .	253
XX. AN INTERRUPTED WEDDING . . . . .	261
XXI. BARBARA LAWSON ABDUCTED . . . . .	269
XXII. ON FOLLY ISLAND . . . . .	285
XXIII. LAURA McLAW AS A LEADER . . . . .	299
XXIV. A MAN TRANSFORMED . . . . .	311
XXV. A MONETARY PANIC . . . . .	327
XXVI. THE FLIGHT TO SCOTLAND . . . . .	338
XXVII. A LOVER'S QUEST . . . . .	353
XXVIII. THE END OF THE STORY . . . . .	364

PAGE  
227  
240  
253  
261  
269  
285  
299  
311  
327  
338  
353  
364

# A Modern Apollos



## CHAPTER I

### The Comrades Quarrel

THE long Civil War was ended, and the city of Washington was gay with the glory of the grand review. The Army of the Potomac, the Army of the Tennessee, and the Army of the Cumberland were united for the last march before the melting of the mightiest host of volunteers that this world has seen.

For days the North had poured its visitors into the Capitol to greet the returning heroes. Exceedingly beautiful was the historic town in all its bravery of laughing banners and rippling pennants. The walls of the broad avenue were like a canyon of color waiting for the river of blue which was to stream solidly between its banks.

People smiled from balcony and gallery. From window and cornice, portico and mansard, they waved the flags and shook out the streamers where the expectant rows and groups of men, women,

and children, made a radiant ravine, miles in length, domed with the sapphire sky and paved with flowers flung by the people before the marching warriors.

First came the musicians, stirring the multitude with martial airs. Then the artillery, with soldiers standing on the black guns and holding their fatigue caps to catch the showers of blossoms. Even the big horses seemed to understand that it was a triumphal journey; for they shook their stormy manes and rattled their heavy harness as if to say, "We had a share in it, too." Unhesitatingly into the battle's din had they dragged the cannon and wheeled to place on the grim edge of war. Now gentle Peace was herding them to a corral, where Fame was sentry and forage never failed, from whence the war trumpet would summon them no more.

After the artillery came the cavalry, filling the civic gulch from curb to curb. Jingling spurs, clattering sabers, made stern music as they rode along. Some were scarred, and some were weak; but all had determined to ride that day, if never again. Their standards were tattered, the guidons frayed, the blue blouses faded, and the caps raised to return a salute to the countless hurrahs, were limp and dusty. "Welcome home! Welcome home!" roared ten thousand throats as the gallant men went by. The conquerors thought of comrades asleep where the black waters of the bayou lap the knees of the cypress-trees; and sighs went upward with the shouts.

Then a cheer that heaved the dome of the

Capitol and shook the firmamental arch hushed every sound as past the reviewing-stand swept the infantry, the battered bulwark of the Nation, the braves who built the barrier of steel round Columbia in the hour of peril, and went out to meet death as children go a-Maying, exultant to lay the supreme sacrifice on the altar of their country.

Splintering the slanting sunbeams into slivers of splendor on their bayonets, they tramped along with rhythmic footfall, every step rhyming in perfect cadence to the rolling drums. Although they looked up, they saw not the faces bent above them. Instead, with moist eyes, through the lenses of their tears, they saw other women and other children, in the woods of Maine and the pine-forests of Michigan, in Vermont valleys and Hoosier intervals, in populous towns and far-spread farms.

In prairie homes and upland cottages, in mountain cabins and frontier ranches, they saw mothers, wives, sweethearts, waiting for them. In every eye was the light of home and on every lip they sang, "We're going home to-morrow!" They felt this was but the foretaste of the feast they would enjoy when the grateful Nation, standing with arms outheld, should fold her dutiful sons to her heart.

When the day was done, the weary men partook gratefully of the good things provided on every hand, and broke into groups to say good-bye—a word not lightly spoken among men who had fronted danger together, and whose souls had been smelted in the furnace of war.

Colonel Satterlee, beloved by all his men, was

the center of a group who were bidding him farewell. His face wore the friendliest of smiles, and his eyes beamed brightly despite his sixty years. Nothing escaped his notice, and while he was talking with the men, he was watching one of them in particular, a young, well set-up officer named Ellis—tall, agile, and graceful, with a slender, handsome face, black hair and mustache. He was known as the grittiest and most fiery soldier in the One Hundred and Third Regiment.

Philip Ellis was standing in silence apart from the others. His handsome head was slightly bowed, and he seemed to be thinking deeply. Suddenly he felt an arm slipped into his, and heard the Colonel's genial "Hello, Captain," before he could turn around.

"You seem very solemn," continued the Colonel. "Why so glum? Does n't the home-going make you gay?"

"There is no home-going for me, Colonel."

"And why not?"

"For one sufficient reason, sir; I have no home. I was, at my earliest recollection, an orphan in an asylum. I was educated in a college built by charity to give boys a start in life. When I came out, I had a trade; but the war was on, and I enlisted. This regiment has been my only home since then. Four years I have lived in it, and I have learned to love it. The tent has been my habitation, the campfire my hearthstone. Now it is breaking up, and I have nowhere to go. I am like a sailor who feels his ship going to pieces under his feet, and sees the water creeping over



his sandals. I have swept the circle of my small career, and end where I began twenty-four years ago—alone in the world; nothing more."

"Surely," said the Colonel, "there is some place you would like to see, some face that would shine to see you return."

"No, sir; not one," returned the Captain. "When I watched the boys reading letters from home, I often felt as if I did not care if I fell in the next fight. And now, whether I go East or West is all the same to me. Not a soul on earth cares if I never come back." And the young man, half ashamed of his confession, started to move away; but the Colonel's hand on his arm detained him.

"Nonsense, Phil, rank nonsense! What is your trade?"

"I am a typesetter, a newspaper compositor, and was reckoned a speedy one, and steady when I worked at the case in our school."

"Well, then," returned the Colonel, "it will take you a few months to look around and settle into a job. I want you to come home with me, will you?"

"No, sir; I can not accept your hospitality. I have saved my pay, and have a few thousand. I'll go somewhere and cut in with strangers."

"Why do you refuse?"

"Simply because I have no claim on you or yours."

"Phil, hush! Do you remember that day at Chancellorsville when I fell under my horse, stunned and crippled, and our men were swept back by

the enemy's double-shotted battery that opened on us from the woods? Who hauled that brute from my broken leg? Who carried me to that clump of trees? Whose arms were under me, and whose face was over me when I came to consciousness? Was it not yours?"

"Yes; but that was nothing more than a soldier's duty."

"Listen again," continued the older man. "I was fifty-six years old when I offered my services to the Nation, and I had a son, a noble boy. No better boy breathed in all our land. He also enlisted and fell dead at the head of the line in the first charge of his brigade at Fair Oaks." The Colonel's eyes became misty for a moment; but he continued: "Now I must return without him. I have a large house and a fair share of this world's goods; and my daughter is waiting at Millbank for my home-coming. It would not be so lonely for either of us if you should walk up the path to the old home with me. Will you do it?"

Ellis pushed the toe of his shoe into the sand meditatively.

"I fear I should be an interloper," he replied. "I wish I had died in your son's stead. He had everything to live for, and I have nothing."

"Fling that notion away. I have in my pocket now a letter from Edith, in which she expresses a desire to see the man who has saved her father's life. She wants to thank him for his brave deed. Will you go? It is only just to me," argued the commander. "I should have a chance to display a little gratitude."

Ellis was wavering. A band swung round the corner, playing "The Girl I Left Behind Me." A conversation between two soldiers standing near was perfectly audible. He heard one say to the other, "Henry, do you know, I'm just dying to get back to God's country? Ain't you, old pard?" and the other answered: "You're reconnoitering in the neighborhood of the truth now, Sam. I am wild to see that Iowa settlement again."

"And mother?"

"Yes, indeedy!"

"And the old farm on Cedar River?"

"Sure as shooting."

"And the schoolma'am in the canary sun-bonnet, eh, Henry?"

"Sam, you'll spoil my manners. Hush, or I'll have to lay down on this hyar grass, and roll. I'll fetch a whoop that'll scare that eagle on the flagstaff yonder. Hush, d'ye hear me!"

A fragment of an old ballad flitted through Philip's brain:

"Fair as the morning, bright as the day;"

and, looking into the kindly face of his gray-haired superior, he answered simply, in his direct and forthright way: "You are very kind, Colonel. When we are mustered out, I will go with you."

The two men separated; and Ellis strolled to the barracks, and sat down to read a paper. Before he had gotten half through with the first page, he was interrupted. A stocky, myopic, swarthy fellow, with a repellent face, loose, sensual mouth,

and heavy, flat nose, drew a chair close to Phil's. It was Major Marley, the nephew of Colonel Satterlee. Philip had always despised his surly, overbearing manners, his brutal ways, and profane speech; but to-day the Major's habit of gnawing at his mustache and the customary sneer on his face were particularly repulsive. Because of his insolent vanity he was unpopular with all the officers, and was, in fact, suspected of being a quitter in battle and a shirk where close fighting was called for; withal a pitiless martinet, ill-famed for his oppression of the soldiers of his command.

He leaned toward the Captain, and said, "I want a word with you, Ellis."

"Well, lam ahead," said Philip, acidly; and the Major continued, a scowl twisting his saturnine visage.

"My uncle—Colonel Satterlee, tells me that he has invited you to his home in Millbank, and that you are going there."

"Yes; what's that to you?" answered Philip, with angry disdain.

"Well, his daughter has long been my sweetheart. I mean to have her, do you hear?"

The Major was becoming offensive, and it was with difficulty that Ellis controlled his temper, which was compounded of percussives and explosives, and always set with a hair trigger. However, he managed to say, scornfully: "I am not deaf. I hear you."

"I want you to promise me that you will keep out of my way in the matter. Will you do it?"

"You say she is your sweetheart. Are you engaged to marry her?"

"Why, no," said the Major, evidently thinking it best to be honest; "but I have known her since she was a child, and I love the ground she walks on, though we are not engaged."

A shadow of a smile was visible on Ellis's face as he asked: "Why do you think I may cut you out? You have many years the start in the race for the prize."

"Well, you are rather a gallus chap, with your dashing ways; and there is no denying your good looks. You understand all that? You are a woman's man, and well equipped. No normal member of the fair sex could pass you by without a second look; and well you are aware of it."

"Thanks, Major," said Philip, and the smile on his face broadened. The comic aspect of the interview struck him. With some effort he suppressed a laugh; for Marley's countenance was as homely as the front elevation of an ichthyosaur. The Major, ignoring his last remark, continued in his blustering way:

"She is young, and her gratitude for what you did to help her father at Chancellorsville will open her heart to you. I know the feminine nature, and I want you to promise not to spoil my life plans. I ask this as a comrade in arms. Will you promise?"

"It is not a fair request," answered Philip. "I think you are needlessly alarmed. Miss Satterlee will, no doubt treat me as a friend who has

rendered her sire a service—merely that, and nothing more.”

The Major was not to be put off thus, and, leaning nearer the Captain, his protuberant eyes glaring through his spectacles, he repeated the question, “Will you promise, Ellis?”

“No, sir,” answered the Captain.

“Then,” a menacing look spread over Marley’s face, “I will write to her this very day, telling her your own history, and warning her to beware.”

“What can you write that will hurt me?” the younger officer asked.

“Much. You were a cast-off foundling and an object of charity in a city institution, a nameless waif.” Ellis winced as Marley went on. “You have no ancestry or family. You may be base-born for aught you know, some beggar’s discarded brat.”

A warning gleam kindled in the Captain’s eyes as he said, sternly, “Do you mean to insult me?”

A venomous snarl tightened the pendulous lower lip of the Major, as he retorted: “Insult you! A gentleman can not insult a pauper. You are too far beneath me, you miserable mudsill, you—”

The Major’s reply was suddenly cut short by a stinging slap upon his cheek, dealt by Philip’s open hand.

“Take that, you whitelivered cur,” said the young officer, rising to his feet and bracing himself for the expected attack. The Major’s glasses flew in one direction, his hat in another, and he reeled toward the wall; but he regained his upright position in a moment, and, plucking a pis-



tol from his breast, he fired at Ellis. The Major's eyes, without spectacles, were not to be relied on. His arm was unsteady, and the bullet bored through the top of Philip's hat. In a moment they were locked in a maddened clutch, wrestling furiously; but the bystanders interfered and parted them. As the Major started away with an officer, he said to Ellis, threateningly:

"Henceforth, Ellis, I am your foe. I never forgive. We shall settle this soon. I shall square this account in full, you low-flung upstart!"

Philip could scarcely retain his fury; but he seemed outwardly calm, as he answered: "Very well, Major. You know where to find me at any time. When you come, there will be something doing, and one to carry. That is talk with the bark on it."

After Marley had walked three squares to his room, breathing threats and imprecations, regardless of his companion, Adjutant Bendig, he turned to that individual, and invited him into his quarters. The pair sat down to talk and smoke; and when the cigars were going freely, Bendig broke out, "How did the row begin?"

"About 'woman, lovely woman,' of course, growled the Major. "What else have men fought about since the world began? Any one with brains enough to grease a gimlet would know that."

"A woman!" chuckled the Adjutant, who was well known for his plain speaking, ignoring the other man's insinuation. Then he observed, "I thought you did n't know there was a woman in this world."

"There is but one," rejoined the Major, "and we have quarreled about her."

"What possible interest have you in the woman?" asked the other, cynically, with hands locked behind his head, his chair tilted, as he watched the smoke rings curling toward the ceiling.

"I love her; that's all," said Marley.

"You love a woman?" queried the Adjutant, incredulously. "Say, partner, go slow, will you? This is too weird! Break it to me easy, on the installment plan. Do n't shock your bosom friend with your hippancy. You are facetious, of course. Joking on a serious subject."

"What is so wonderful about my being in love?" asked the Major.

"Same as a snow man being in a sweat, exactly. The fellows all say, if you have a heart concealed anywhere about your person, it is made of a spall from the nether millstone, and has the temperature of a crockery dog in a refrigerator," explained Bendig, sarcastically. "Mister Marley in the rôle of a lover stretches conjecture until it splits up the back."

"As bad as that, is it?" glowered Marley, "because I do n't 'wear my heart on my sleeve for daws to peck at,' they think I have no sentiment, that no woman could care for me."

"That's the truth," said the bluff, straightforward Bendig. "It is generally conceded that a parlor tête-a-tête with you would be about as tropical as a nap in an ice-house. You are con-

sidered the most anæmic proposition in the whole army."

"Don't you think I would treat a helpmate well?"

"You would certainly take cozy good care of her husband. What claim have you on the young lady, may I inquire, diffidently?"

"Well, she is my cousin; that is one claim."

"Ho, ho!" laughed Bendig, twining his long legs, a habit he had when interested, "that cuts no gure. Cupid never studied genealogy. The rosy boy with the bow does not cut his arrows from a family tree; and they are tipped with fire, not with blood."

"I am aware of that fact," returned the other; "but I have known her fifteen years. We are old friends. I carried her schoolbooks and pulled her on my sled when she was a slip of a girl."

"Is she beautiful?" asked the Adjutant.

"Surpassingly beautiful, in a petite way," replied the Major; "her height is only five feet."

"Yes," drawled Bendig, "a sort of Junoette, I fancy. A vest-pocket Venus. Would n't she look well squired by such a glacial Adonis as you! Is she dark or light?"

"An adorable blonde," Marley returned, "heaped up, honey-colored hair, celestial-blue eyes, and fair, smooth skin. She has gentle ways and a figure molded of all exquisite perfections. Her hands and feet are the shapeliest, and she is modest, artless, and good. Add to these charms the grace of a startled doe on a woodland river brim and

a voice like a new-waked lark outsoaring the first beams of the sun."

"Delectable! Whew!" ejaculated Bendig. "You are hard hit, my crony. I see you are booked for the land of the benedicts, if fortune favors your suit. Your talk is as full of flummery as are the moonlight rhapsodies of any Romeo that ever raved; but you have not mentioned her chief charm as yet—one that eclipses all the others."

"What do you mean?" questioned Marley, looking steadily at the Adjutant. "Have you seen her?"

"No, not even with my mind's eye; neither have I fought, bled, and died with you three years for nothing. What is the size of her wallet? When the love of lucre was dished out, you passed your plate twice. I have heard you say that the rustle of banknotes was more musical than the swish of the petticoats, and Hymen's torch might be used to scare away the wolf of poverty, as a frontiersman flashes a firebrand at a coyote."

"O, she is rich enough," said Marley, with an uneasy look in his shifting eyes. "She is the only heiress of her father, and he is wealthy. I should hate to see it go to such an underbred cad as Ellis."

"Why do you think he may get her?"

"My reason is this: She writes to me occasionally, and her letter said that she was anxious to see the man who saved her father's life. That's the woman of it, you know. I did n't care as long as he had no intention of going there; but when my uncle told me to-day that Captain Ellis had

accepted his invitation to visit the old home, I foresaw what her gratitude to such a fellow would lead to. Everybody cottons to him. He has a manner, and is the style of man who would captivate her; and so I tried to get his pledge that he would leave the field to me. But he mocked me; and when I taunted him with his shady origin, he struck me. But I swear, Bendig," said the opinionated blunderer, blazing into a rage, "by all that I hold sacred, I will humble him for that deed. I will crush him, and to that work I dedicate my life. I will have revenge at any cost."

"O Marley, you are talking foolishly," replied the Adjutant. "You should not have mentioned the lady to Ellis. It was unsoldierly to speak of his humble beginning. A pot should be slow to criticise the complexion of its culinary companions. He is as good as you. Let the matter drop."

The banal blood in his arteries seethed with Satanic malice as he cried, trembling with pent-up fury: "Never! curse him, the nameless hound that he is! I have sworn his destruction, and I shall hold life cheap until that oath is fulfilled."

"O, shut up!" gurgled Bendig. "Do n't be so sniffy. You give a fellow the fantods with your everlasting cackle about your progenitors. Ellis is your equal in everything but uppishness; and if you fool with him you'll get your comb cut. When you gave him the rough side of your tongue, did he mention any of your shortcomings?"

"No," replied the Major; "he only quoted the Kentucky adage, 'What's the use of a pedigree if the horse can't trot?'"

"Some folks have all the luck," commented the Adjutant. "Probably he thought he could n't do the subject justice, or add anything to the general stock of information concerning you. You ought to forgive him because he was silent on that theme."

"Forgive him!" retorted Marley; "not I! When he is brought low in the dust and craves pardon, I will forgive him; not before."

"That day will never dawn," said Bendig, as he rose to go to his quarters. "Take a friend's advice, and vex him no more, but make a direct assault on the citadel of the girl's affections. 'Faint heart never won fair lady;' and no one can foretell where a maiden's fancy will fall. You have as good a chance to secure her as the Captain has. Love is blind, you know."

With this cheery philosophy the redoubtable Adjutant went out, and fared down the street, whistling "Old Bob Ridley O."



## CHAPTER II

### The Specter of the Mill

THE Colonel and Ellis were at last on their way to the former's home. In the town of X— they were obliged to stop overnight to wait for a desirable train. That evening they strolled along the busy streets, greatly enjoying the color and glitter of city life. The novelty was refreshing, and every shop window was a delight. "This thing of men being separated from women and children for years in military camps is all wrong," said the elder man. "I am glad to get back to civilization. The stir of the avenues gives my blood a fillip. It puts social zest into me again."

When they had enjoyed the life and light of the main street for a time, they strayed away from the thoroughfare. Following some loungers, who quickened their steps into a side street, they came upon a motley gathering of people, dimly visible in the half darkness. The crowd had collected in the middle of the block before a large brick house, standing stiffly amid some ancestral elms. The high iron fence before it might once have shut out intruders, but its rusty gate had fallen from its hinges and now lay prone upon the long coarse

grass within the yard. The people surged and clattered about the gateway, without venturing to enter, until the sidewalk was choked.

"What 's the row here?" demanded Satterlee.

A Negress with a child in her arms answered, "De woman jest went in dar."

"Does she live there?"

"Law sakes, no sah! Nobuddy lib in dar. No-buddy ain't libbed in dar fo' mo'n five yeahs. Dat 's de suckemstance we cain't git frew our haid. Ebberybuddy dun lef' dar long ago."

"Who is the woman who has just gone in?"

"Dat 's what I want to know. Who is she? She ain't no sure enuff woman, no flesh-and-blood human being same as me. She 's a spook."

"A what?"

"A ha'ant, mistah. Two times ebery month she walk down dis yeah street, and goes in dar, an' nebber come out no moh. Dat old tumbly house is done ha'anted suah 's yuh bawn."

"Where does she come from?"

"Do n't come from nowhere. She 's jest dar in de walk where dat tree is, right smack dar, widout comin' dar. Den she slide along and float up de steps and in at de front doh."

The crowd grew larger, and all were whispering about the shadowy visitant. Several claimed to have seen her enter.

Ellis turned to his companion, and said: "Colonel, this is my chance."

"What do you mean?" asked the elder man.

"I have always longed to see a ghost. I disbelieve all stories of supernatural beings. I hold

that when people are dead they are done with this world—done done, as the deckhands say.”

“And so you believe in one world at a time.”

“Yes, sir; I am a home ruler, and allow no foreign interference.”

“I differ from you in that.”

“Well, I do n’t know it all, of course; but here is a chance to learn.” Then, stepping to a group of men, he asked, “Did you actually see this apparition?”

“Yes, sir,” one of the bystanders answered, “as plainly as I see you.”

“What was the appearance of the woman?”

“She seemed to be about thirty years old, and was clothed in white—a dull, lusterless white. Her face was ashen pale, and her eyes glowed like lamps; her hands were clasped as in prayer, and she seemed to glide past me. I could have touched her. As she approached the door, it slowly opened, and when she had passed in, it swung shut, but not a sound was heard.”

Philip asked another onlooker, “Did you see her?”

“I can take oath that I saw her just as Mr. Binder described.”

“Wait till I come out,” said Ellis, and with a leap he was up the stone stairs. He turned the door-knob, but the door was locked. He shook it violently, but with no result. Then he clanged the heavy brass knocker, but only the echo in the empty rooms answered him. Surely those men could not all be liars, Ellis thought to himself. They had seemed to be in deepest earnest.

was about to seek the street when he thought of the back entrance, and walked quickly along a brick path overhung with syringa bushes to an ancient arbor, and tried the rear door. It opened, and he stepped in. A few rats fled from him, scampering, and then all was silence.

Walking into the front rooms he saw the moonlight streaming in upon the dusty floors. He went to the window, and, while gazing on the throng in the street, he heard one man say, in louder tones than the rest, "You'll never see that fellow again." Every moment the people were becoming more numerous, and policemen were busy keeping a path open for pedestrians.

Up the long, creaking stairway Ellis groped his way to the second floor, and examined every closet and corner. Then he climbed to the third story, and strolled calmly about. He knew no fear, and loved a chance for excitement. He saw no sign of an attic, and was descending to the main floor when it occurred to him that he had not explored the cellar. He moved slowly down the crooked cellar stairway, listening. The silence was intense. A faint glimmer came through the grimy panes of the basement windows. As soon as his eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom, he walked from one end of the large, damp room to the other. For a time he stood intent and quiet, and then ascended the stairs and went out to the street.

When he suddenly stepped out of the shadow of the trees, the people shrank slightly, and an officer asked, "Well, what did you find?"

"What I expected—nothing," answered Ellis.

The officer was not satisfied, and asked, "Is the house empty?"

"As vacant as a dead man's eye," returned the Captain.

"It is very queer," said the man with the star. "I have heard this story several times in the last three months;" and he ordered the people to disperse.

As the crowd scattered, Satterlee and Ellis walked to the corner. They did not notice that two men were following them, until one of the strangers addressed them. As they turned about, one of the men said to Ellis: "Excuse me, sir. I saw you go into that house, and I would like to speak to you."

"Very well," replied Philip.

"Have you no dread of ghosts?" asked the stranger.

"Dread?" said Ellis. "Why, I would walk barefooted through a mile of snow to see one. I used to go into the graveyards at midnight and lie between two graves waiting for them. I spent half a night alone in the dead-house of a hospital speering for spooks. I am aching to see one."

"Would you go anywhere to see one?" asked the man.

"Anywhere in reason."

"Well, I can show you one."

"Where is it?"

"It is on the edge of this city, about seven miles south, almost in the country."

"Tell me the facts as you know them."

"They are few. In the locality I mention, on the river bank, is a deserted cotton-mill. On the first night of every month a light appears in the upper room at midnight. It has been seen three or four times. I myself have seen it three times, and will swear it is no illusion. I have wished for a man of your courage to solve the mystery."

"This is the first day of the month," said Ellis.

"So it happens," said the stranger.

"Can we get there before midnight?" the Captain asked.

"Yes, sir. Will you go?"

Ellis hesitated a moment, and then asked the man his name. The stranger answered, "Henderson, Albert Henderson; and my friend's name is John Borden."

"Well," the Captain said, "my name is Ellis, and this is Colonel Satterlee. I am inclined to go. What say you, Colonel?" he continued, turning to his companion.

"I am ready, if you are," the Colonel answered.

Borden looked at his watch, and said: "It is now ten o'clock. I will call a carriage. Wait till I return, gentlemen." In a few moments he came back in the desired vehicle. When they were all seated in the carriage, Borden told the man on the box to drive to Cottage Park. As the cab door was slammed shut, the Captain said: "Of course, there is a legend connected with the bogie we are going to visit. A specter without a creepy story would be an egg without salt."

"Yes," replied Borden, "and the tale is true. I will not answer for the hobgoblin; but I was

an eye-witness of the awesome fact from which the popular belief grew. Years ago the mill was full of male and female operatives; and one day a spinner was caught in a belt, drawn under an iron pulley, and crushed against a beam. He was wedged in tightly and mangled cruelly. The machinery could not be reversed, and the only way the moaning mass of flesh and bones could be released was to unscrew the bolts that held the shaft-hangers in place. I was one of the men who made the wrenches fly for twenty minutes while the aching people looked on. When we tore away the shaft, he slipped to the floor, gave a gasp, and died. He had no wife, and only one child—a daughter—who had a pair of looms in the room below. As we worked at the rescue, she could see part of his broken body protruding from the narrow crevice in which it was driven; and when it was drawn out, and she saw he was gone, she drew a knife which she used at her work, and cut her throat with one swift motion. They died together, as I can testify; for I looked on the scene with my own eyes, and many folks assert her spirit, clothed in white, haunts the decaying mill, and stands by the red spot on the floor where her life blood gushed out, moaning and wringing its hands. If the last part of the recital is as true as the first portion of it, the forsaken factory has a real ghost."

"There is nothing lacking in the uncanny chronicle," observed the Colonel. "It is as chill as a blast from the open Polar Sea. I feel an icicle creeping up my back already." Ellis agreed that

the local color was all right, and remarked dubiously: "If we don't see a wraith to-night, there is nothing in looking for them in likely places."

They were whirled rapidly through the city. Soon the street lamps ceased to shed their dim light on the way. No cars nor omnibuses were heard, and no lights were visible, save here and there a lamp blinking from the window of a sick-room. Occasionally a belated citizen was passed, wending his homeward way along the paths or wooden walks. After a time even the board walks failed, and they were on a raw country road. They rode toward the river, which rolled southward in a darkling flood; for thick clouds were scudding across the moon. In a clump of cottonwoods, Borden told the driver to halt and wait until they should return. Across the stream a dog howled dismally, and an owl in the willows was shrewing at the frogs along the river bank. Near by loomed the mill, outlined against the sky. It was a mere shell, abandoned long before.

"A likely place for anything freakish," said Ellis. "I wish I had a dark-lantern."

"Have you a revolver?" asked Satterlee.

"No."

"Take mine. I will go with you if you enter the place."

"No, no," returned the Captain; "there is no danger. What time is it?"

"It lacks fifteen minutes of midnight," said Borden.

Ellis turned to Henderson, "You say that the light is visible only after midnight?"



"Yes," replied Henderson, "between twelve and one."

"Well, here goes. Stay in the shadow unless I fire a shot. Then come to my aid quickly."

"Say, stranger," said Borden. "I won't mix in any fight. Do n't ask that of me. I can't afford to do it. My mate won't either."

"Very well," said Ellis, "I won't ask it." He saw they could not be relied on. Then he walked toward the old building, looking for a door; but there was none on the near side of the mill; and he was about to walk around it, when he caught sight of a forebay that had once been used to carry water to the overshot wheel. It was empty and rotting. The long uprights supporting it seemed like a procession of giants carrying a coffin. Ellis knew that it would bear his weight, and would serve to lead him to the highest part of the structure. Carefully, even painfully, he slipped through it on hands and knees, and, using his experience as a scout in the army, he at last climbed out on the arms of the motionless wheel, and looked across the empty garret of the establishment. Nothing could be seen but some broken frames of power-looms, a few spools from the spinning-mule, a heap of iron bailing-ties, and some sacks of shoddy.

"This is as good a place as any," he soliloquized, setting himself on one of the waterworn flanges of the wheel, where he could overlook the room and the staircase coming from below. The position was not easy, and he was soon muttering to himself, "The next man who re-

hearses a spook yarn to me will have Phil Ellis to fight."

But listen! Hark! Below, in the weave-room, he heard a step, and then low voices. Soon a man appeared ascending the staircase and holding a lantern, followed by another carrying a satchel. They sat down on some bobbin-boxes, lighted cigars, and talked in low tones, laughing betimes.

In about ten minutes another pair came up the stairs, bringing a lantern, but no satchel. They shook hands, greeting each other with stilted politeness, and Ellis could hear them calling the older man of the firstcomers Operator No. 1 and the older man of the later arrivals Operator No. 9. No names were used. "A bad lot," muttered the Captain, "as the devil said of the Ten Commandments. What are the varlets up to, I wonder. I will watch them awhile and find out."

The man called Operator No. 1 wore a full black beard, closely trimmed, and was well dressed. He was stockily built, and had a horsy style about him, that indefinable air which bespeaks the porting character, and seemed about forty years of age. His companion was a much younger man, with a slight cast in his eyes and a hang-dog expression of face. His hair and mustache had a tinge of red. His skin was very white, and his hands were slender. He was lithe and graceful in his movements, and evidently had little to say concerning the business.

"Take a drink of red-eye to wash the cobwebs out of your throats," said No. 1 to the other disreputables.

After the flask had been passed and each had drunk a dram, the valise was opened. Two bundles of banknotes were taken from it and laid on a box, and one of the late comers took a large wallet from his coat-pocket, counted out certain sums, and passed them to No. 1. He then handed one of the bundles to his partner, and shoved the other into his pocket, asking, as he did so, "How is the work in the West?"

"Good; it is a gold-mine for us all," replied No. 1.

"Can you supply us if we put out a few more circulators?"


"No," said No. 1. "Take no chances. Do n't overdo the thing. Very few can be trusted at this trade. Keep a still tongue and a peeled eye, and all will flourish with us. Here are the brotherhood rings. I have them at last. Take your choice," he said to the three men, and he laid some jewelry on the box before the quartet.

The Captain knew he was gazing on a gang of counterfeiters, or their agents, and pondered on an attempt to capture them. He liked a spice of danger. It sharpened his faculties and was a tonic to his nerves. More than once he had slipped through death's skeleton fingers on the field of carnage; but the coachman was half a mile away. The two citizens would take no share in a battle, and no doubt the quartet of outlaws would show fight if cornered. He balanced the probabilities of a favorable outcome, if he should attack the unsuspecting reprehensibles. The odds are too formidable, he speculated; it would be folly.

There were only himself and the old Colonel against four foes, and he at once relinquished the idea of trapping them. "I could kill one or two of the burrowing knaves," he cogitated, as he leveled his pistol at No. 1; "but that would be making Phil Ellis sheriff, judge, jury, and hangman all in one, which is piling it on too heavy for a modest man like me." Noticing a window behind him through which he could drop if pressed, he chuckled, and said, "I'll scare them out of a year's growth, though;" and, edging around, he aimed his revolver at the lantern sitting on the box. Steadily he drew the bead. Slowly he pressed the trigger, when a sight that froze the ruddy tide in his veins changed all his plans. A tall, slender figure of a woman robed in spotless white came slowly and silently through the door in the western wall, and glided, or, rather, floated—so effortless was her motion—toward the plotters. No footsteps were heard upon the floor of the shaky edifice. Her face was corpse-like, and the ghost hunter noted a ruby line across her throat. Though the night was warm, a draught of cold air sent a shiver through him. His heart knocked against his ribs. Despite his oaken will, his abundant courage all evaporated; and when the specter stopped beside a dull red spot on the boards, lifted her hands, and emitted a horrible moan, he was cold with fear. He gripped the splintered plank where he crouched as that long-drawn shuddering wail filled the air full of stifled mutterings, which penetrated every cranny of the accursed place. "Don't be a fool, Phil Ellis," he mused,

half hysterical with turbulent emotions. He noticed how clammy was the touch of his hands as he wiped the cold sweat from his forehead and made one mighty effort to rally his energies. The attempt was successful; for his nerves responded to his will, and he said, "I must speak to this shadow, come what may." The conspirators saw not the approaching apparition until the cry was heard, when they arose, startled, and stared at her fixedly, not thirty paces away. For a minute they were palsied, then turned with frightened faces, and ran leaping down the stairs, stumbled through the dark, vermin-infested office into the night, hurried to their boats beside the river bank, and loosed them into the rapid current, never daring to look back at their supernatural visitor. Philip could hear the rattle of the oars as they rowed away. Setting his teeth, he climbed down the wheel, and was about to step from it when the phantom, in wavy motions, came at him. He tried to speak; but only a dry, sibilant, inarticulate sound left his lips. Then the spectral foe lifted its hands, and again that hideous shriek clotted the blood around his heart. As the cry died away, a rush of waters was heard, and a malign, chilling laugh came from his cadaverous enemy as a flood roared over the wheel, sweeping him into the flume, whence he was flung into the tail race, and, with drifting débris, was tumbled into the turbid river, and swept away toward the sea.

The Colonel had heard the twice-repeated scream, and, forgetting his orders, hurried with the other two to the mill. He was in time to see



two boats shoot into the shadows along the shore and hear a raging flood boiling through the unused sluice from the forebay above the wheel. No person could be seen when they entered the building, though two lanterns were burning, side by side, and when they took them to the dam above they saw that the rusty headgate had been recently lifted, and the water was flowing in great volume on the creaking wheel. They then went down to the spot where the lamps were found.

"What has become of Captain Ellis?" Satterlee asked, in troubled tones, and peered suspiciously at the two men. Had they led his friend into a net? Was he caught by some devilish device? They asserted they knew nothing, and Satterlee's fears were dissipated by Ellis himself, who had won to the shore by swimming, some distance below, and returned to the scene.

"Hello, Colonel!" he called. "Here I am, none the worse for a muddy bath."

The three gazed wonderingly on the dripping man, and the Colonel said, "I knew you were in the hunt for ghosts, but I did n't think you would dive for them."

"It was involuntary," said the Captain. "I had no choice in the matter. First thing I knew I was in the river."

As he spoke his foot struck a metallic object. He stooped and picked up a ring of chased gold, with green setting. He then told his companions about the four sharpeners, and remarked:

"This is one of the rings which the leader distributed. I will keep it, and it may be of service

in exposing the coneyackers. They made the light which has no doubt given this ramshackle mill the name of a haunted place. They very likely have been here before, for they seemed quite at home."

"But did you see a ghost?" asked the Colonel, who saw that Ellis was greatly shaken.

"That's what I don't know," he replied, reflectively. "I saw something."

After they had parted from the twain who had brought them there, and were riding cityward in the carriage, the Colonel, who was a deep student in psychology, said, "Captain, I greatly desire you to tell me, with minute detail, all you know of what you saw in the room."

Ellis rehearsed the story to the smallest particular, and concluded by saying: "I was mightily stirred, greatly agitated by what I witnessed. The appearance and motion of the figure was unaccountable, unlike anything I have looked upon; but it could not have been a phantom; mortal eyes could not behold a spirit, could they?"

"No," said the elder man, "for the sufficient reason that a simple, disembodied spirit can not exist. Paul says, 'Not that I would be unclothed, but clothed upon with my body which is from heav'n.' He refers to what is properly called the spirit's body, but not the body of flesh and blood as we know it in common parlance."

"Is this spirit body material?"

"Undoubtedly," answered the Colonel. "It is made of matter, which is a much misunderstood part of creation. It is usually conceived grossly as something palpable."

"I think so," agreed the Captain, who was getting out of his depth.

"Well, that conception is the basis of much inept thinking. If I had a piece of iron, it would be matter; when fluxed in a smelter it would still be matter, only more fluent. When under a fierce blowpipe heat it went into gas it would still be matter, only more tenuous, would it not? A piece of ice may be made water, then made into steam. It is in each stage only matter."

"Of course," assented Philip.

"Nothing else," argued the Colonel. "Now, suppose a woman's spirit, leaving the heavy body of flesh, blood, and bone, should assume the lighter body woven of such stuff as gas or steam, it would still be a spirit in a body—a material body; yet, if you were to see that person, you would call him a spirit—a soul without a body; a thing no person has ever seen, nor will see."

"That's plain enough; and the form I saw moved as if clothed in some such weightless tissue."

"Furthermore," went on Mr. Satterlee, "in such a body that person would have powers perfectly natural to it, yet occult to us who are imbedded in heavy bodies. It would be called a ghost."

"Do you think," queried Philip, "I saw such a being?"

"I can't say," replied the gray-haired man. "You are the best judge of what you saw. If you did, there was nothing supernatural about it. It was natural as any person is natural, but garbed in a more delicate web than we are, none the less a material one. That spirits may revisit this earth



in garments more diaphanous than the coarse work-a-day bodies we wear is not incredible to me. It is no more strange that they should come the second time in fine attire, than that they were here the first time in hodden gray of ordinary mortality. You may have seen one."

"Maybe I did," muttered Ellis, ruefully. "I wonder if the flood soaked her as it did me. I guess not," he went on. "According to your theory the deluge did not dampen her at all. How little we know of these subjects as full of interest to 'all mankind!'"

"True," assented the senior, "but as every midnight is but a morrow bud, our ignorance will flower into knowledge soon."

"Meanwhile, we must wait," concluded Philip. "I confess my unbelief received a rap to-night. Not all the fires of Dante's vision, if seen, could fright me as that wavering, intangible shape did."


"Let us be patiently receptive," counseled the Colonel; "not faithless, but expectant. We are in a good universe, arranged to help and not to harm us in the long run. We must keep its laws, however. Some time, whatever is to be known we shall know, and when the vital dust that builds our spirits' ramparts escapes the charnal confines, and is blown by autumn winds into eyes as dull as ours are, we shall gaze upon the wide circle of the wondrous truth, seen so imperfectly now through the narrow wicket of the present world."

### CHAPTER III.

## The Home of the Ronans

ONE calm summer morning a sad woman was sitting on the porch of a home in Delhurst, Illinois, across the way from her husband's smithy. A catbird was calling—chee wink—in a catalpa near by, and through a honeysuckle vine a humming-bird drove its flashing shuttle, but the afflicted woman seemed to hear and see nothing. Though her eyes were fixed upon the road, it is doubtful if she really observed the wagons creeping up the dusty grade or the milkcarts returning to the dairy farms with empty cans and sleepy drivers, after the early delivery.

Gazing with set eyes, she did not notice a pedestrian emerging from the old covered bridge until he turned in at the gate. The newcomer was way-worn and stooped, and his clothes were patched and faded. A queer nondescript, well known in that community, was this road-weary philosopher. On his back hung an odorous sheaf of mint, bound with a willow withe, doubtless gathered to sell to the druggist, who shipped the scented harvest to the extract mill. He was carrying a rude creel, made of birchbark sewed with rushes, and half-filled with mushrooms. Over it lay a covering of



newly-gathered cresses, and around the edges some roots of sassafras and sweet anise.

As the man came awkwardly up the path, the woman on the porch recognized him. It was Barney, "the Minty," a queer character, with a round head covered with short hair, and the bluest eyes, that twinkled with his piping voice. With his comical gestures and bright chatter he was welcome everywhere. Long had he frequented the neighborhood, but had been away almost three years, no one knew where, and no one cared enough to inquire about him. Now, on his return, he was ignorant of the great trouble that darkened the Ronan home.

As he approached the porch, he called out: "The top of the mornin' to ye all; the foine weather is a comfort to a wayfarer's sowl. Here's a trifling treat I've brought the young man of the house. Long life to him! Tubbe sure it's only a wheen o' cresses and some nubbins o' sassyfrax."

"Sit down, Barney," said Mrs. Ronan; "you are very clever. Why do you bring this to Beverly?"

"Well, then, ma'am," said "the Minty," "I'll soon tell you that. I live in the quarry beyant Higgin's hill, in the thick woods, as everywan knows. One day, the winter before I went away, I had a dhrop too much at the tavern above, and came down the hill, trippin' myself, so unsteady I was. It was the fall of the night, an' coarse weather, an' your son saw me pass by toward the hill. He put on his coat, and tailed afther me. Sure, he has a heart as big as a boxcar, an' it

tould him I might lie down by the road and freeze before mornin', or get newmony, or brownkittis, or some other mishap that would carry me off. The darlin' pretended he was goin' that way on bizness, and he took owld Barney's arm, and steadied me to my dure, and stood till Nora, my wife, began tonguelashin' me, an', seein' I was that safe an' comfortable, he set his face for home again. 'Twas a Christian act, an' I can't forget it; so I brought him this token, hopin' it'll be toothsome to him. The loikes of him is an honor to ye both."

It was very evident that he had not heard of their misfortune, and Mrs. Ronan said:

"Barney, I have something to tell you that will disappoint you. Beverly is away, far away, condemned as a convict. He is immured in jail for a crime he never committed; and our home is empty, our fireside is desolate. I thought to lean on my son when I went down the sunset hill of life. Alas! the staff is taken from my hand, the light has gone out of my eyes!"

"Huh? In jail, ma'am!—holy hivins—in jail! What's that ye say; the loikes of him in jail?" ejaculated Barney. "Sorra a crime he ever did; no more nor a unweaned baby. The divil's left hand is in it! Would you tell me about it? I've been away three years to me owld home in Maryland, working on an oyster-boat. I know as little as a goat about his trouble. I'll be uncommon thankful if ye will enlighten me about it. Sure, some wan has fabricated lies on him. It daunts me to hear it."

## The Home of the Ronans 41

"Well," the mother answered, "it is a miserable story, and brief enough. When Beverly came home from college on his vacation a pair of United States detectives followed him from the cars to our house, and he was seized, upon his arrival, and searched. Bad money was found on him, both in his pocket and in his traveling-bag. He was led away to jail, protesting his ignorance of the whole thing. In three months he was tried, and sentenced to prison for twelve years. There was no room for him in the prison of this State, and so he was sent to another, which keeps Government criminals for the National authorities. Now he is in a cell, and we are crushed in sorrow."

"An' woe worth the day! Who wuz the witnesses that testified agin' him?" asked Barney in a gentle tone, with a sympathetic manner wholly unexpected in one so coarsely clad and so rude of speech.

"No witnesses were needed, as he was detected with the spurious currency on his person, and overtaken with it in his possession. However, a man named Mooney, from St. Louis, testified that he was requested by my son to circulate the counterfeit money for a share in the nefarious gains. One point against Beverly was his absence for three days between his departure from college and his arrival at home. He refused to give account of the three days, or to explain his absence in any way."

"An' the man who testified against him, was it Bat Mooney?" asked Barney, after a moment's reflection.

"His baptismal name was Jeremiah, I believe," replied Mrs. Ronan.

"'T is the same. Bad luck to the loikes o' him! He's as crooked as a dog's leg, and the biggest liar that ever cocked a lip. I would . . . hang a sparrow on the oath of him!" said Barney, angrily. "It is not Barney Foley," he continued, "that 'll let black wrong like this be done an' he not try to right it."

"You can do nothing now, Barney," said Mrs. Ronan, hopelessly.

"Mebbe I can't, and mebbe I can, ma'am," returned Barney. "Sure, I was n't always a vagrant. I can show honorable scars of my soldier's life. I took the Queen's shillin', and once held up me chin among men, before I became a wanderer on the face of the earth. I am only a 'Minty,' gathering sassafras an' sweet anise an' cresses an' mint, an' livin' in me shack in the quarry beyant, but I am known from the river to the lake as an honest man. When I whittle my dogwood skewers for the butchers in the winter, and trap a few muskrats in the fall, I wrong no one; and the few civil words I resave I don't forgit. Your son has a soul in him bigger than the rock o' Cashel, an' it melts me heart like wax to think of him in prison this day. Sure, I wish I could take his place, and send him here to run across the lawn and kiss his mammy once more."

The mother's lips quivered, as she answered: "The worst of all is this, Mr. Foley: His career is closed as a minister, almost before it began. His character is sullied, and no Church would ac-

cept his services. This, I fear, will rive his heart, and wreck him, for he was wrapped up in his work, and looked into the future with glowing anticipation. Now all is ruined."

Barney was a great talker, and deeper than he seemed. When he was once started, it was difficult to stop him.

"Thru for ye, ma'am! O, 't is he has the right sort o' religion, so it is. D' ye mind when Lew Collins bruk his leg four years ago, come Christmas, an' could n't drive the dhray?"

Mrs. Ronan nodded, and Barney went on:

"He was not a forehanded man, bein' like me-self fond o' a glass o' the poteen, an' he crooked his elbow too often. So poverty came down on the wife an' childer, and she too proud to tell a mortal, whin they were livin' on one meal a day, mostly biled mush at that. And she pawned the broché shawl her mother give her at her weddin' to buy medicine for her man, an' stuck to him like purple dulse to the rocks o' the say. Well, d' ye know, a passel o' good people got up a meetin' at his house for his benefit, not knowin' the small family was starvin'. Blessings on them, they all mane well! Thinkin' of souls, they never notice how the flesh fails. Nora an' me sez our beads regular, an' I could n't sleep peaceful unless I said the rosary. I've wished tin thousand times I had more peaty meself, that I have. But Beverly had the real ould notion of a meetin', right up to the knocker. He walks out that evenin' to big Jim Howlett's. You know, Jim is as ungodly as a brickyard mule, and his swearin' has been known

to stop a man's watch. "T would make your blood run crimpy to hear the larrupin', whin the fit is on him, and his temper is as sassy as a navy-blue wasp."

Mrs. Ronan tried not to look incredulous, for she was almost as much interested as Barney was.

"An' Beverly," continued Barney, "sez, 'Jim, how's things out in this nick o' woods?' 'Fust rate,' sez Jim; 'everything is purtier en a speckled pup. Glad to see you, Bev,' and he ripped out a double-jinted oath, with a saw-edge on it a rod long; 'haint seed you since you beat me rasslin' last Fourth o' July. What blowed you out this way?'"

"'Well,' sez Beverly, 'I come out to get some stuff for the Collins meetin'. 'I want a lot of it, too,' he sez.

"'A lot o' what?' sez Jim, lettin' his jaw drop, an' bitin' off another chaw o' stub an' twist. 'Are you gettin' looney?' an' he tossed off another hank o' blasphemous language that wud make your hair curl. 'Yer passin' the basket up the wrong pew fer that sort o' truck,' he sez.

"'No, sir, I mean it,' sez Bev. Then he up an' tells Jim about the Collins's livin' on a crust, an' the man lyin' in bed all pore an' ga'anted; an' Jim he norated it to his wife, Jinny, an' she says 'Hitch up, Beverly, while Jim gits the stuff out o' the smokehouse, and I git some out o' the pantry.' An' they filled the wagon as full as a tick. There was two dressed chickens, one ham, an' a crock o' sausage, some souse, three dozen eggs in a pail o' bran, a cheese eight months



old, and four pounds o' yellow butter, two sacks o' spuds, one bag o' beans, four bushel o' apples and three o' turnips. An' Jinny's contribution wuz a box o' honey, six jars o' canned cherries, a hunk o' maple sugar, some pickles, an' a lot o' quince marmalade, with jelly, an' a two-gallon jug o' sorghum molasses, a mess o' buckwheat meal, an' a loaf o' salt-risin' bread.

"Just as the meetin' in the Collins house over there was beginnin' to hum, in walks Jim an' Beverly, with their arms full o' eatin', an' piles it on the rag-carpet. They makes seven trips from the gate, an' the floor was a sight. You'd ought to seed the younkits' eyes shine—had n't had a square meal fer a month; an' when a sack o' pippins bust open, each grabbed two apples, an' said, 'Mammy, look!' an' she could n't look fer cryin' to see the children that happy. To cap it all, Jim unties a burlap poke, an' shakes out on top o' the heap a little white, live pig, an' when the shoat dived under the bed, squealing like a steam kalleyope, he struck an attitude, like Washington crossin' the Alps, an' sez: 'Bretherin an' sisterin,' he sez, in the langwidge of the pote lariat, 'what 's the matter with that sort o' religion?' he sez. 'I say it 's got more fillin' into it,' he sez, 'than any sarment these sky-pilots could cawnkoct in their pulpits,' he sez, 'in a month o' Sundays,' he sez. 'I'm sorry fer this afflicted fambly,' he sez; 'I'm sorry, at the least cackleation, eleven dollars' worth o' grub,' he sez, 'an' I'll bet a hoss the angels'll say it 's all hunkidory. 'That 'ere cheese is a whole mite-society itself,' he sez. 'You git a

game-legged man holed up in a heap o' fodder like this,' he sez, 'an' he can keep the creases out o' his folks' stummicks fer some time,' he sez, 'or even longer,' he sez.

"An' old Deacon Somers brushed the dust offen his knees, an' sez, 'That's good enuf religion,' he sez. 'The Lord must have sent that load to this needy fambly,' he sez.

"Jim he flares up, an' snorts out: 'Not by a jugful,' he sez. 'I hauled that load myself. That kind o' talk do n't go on this load o' poles. I chucked in this 'ere collection fer the good o' the cause all by my lonesome,' he sez, stiffer'n a saplin'.

The deak he stuck to his guns, an' sez: 'That's all right, Jim,' he sez; 'the Lord sent it, even if the devil brung it,' he sez. An' Beverly he sez 'Amen,' an' begins to sing like a starling, an' everyone jined in, Jim and all. He has the reel stuff in him, Beverly hes, an' it's a burnin' shame to see him abused."

Barney's twinkling eyes galloped as he gave himself to unchecked mirth in memory of the meeting in the Collins cottage, and the ample outcome of Beverly's strategy.

The straggler's story was finished. He raised his battered hat, and, turning abruptly, walked away without another word.

But the mother sat still long after the little gate had closed behind "the Minty's" droll figure. Her eyes were looking toward the East, and they filled with tears, now and then, for her only son,

the pride and hope of her life, a prisoner away off there behind the line of hills that touched the sky.

As soon as Barney reached his home, he told the story of Beverly's imprisonment to his wife. When the recital of it was finished, he asked: "Who would gain anything by this outrageous trick, Nora dear? Who could want Bev Ronan out of the way?"

"Why, Barney, I can see that wid half an eye. Do n't you know Beverly dotes on Barbara Lawson, and that ould thief o' the world, Dr. Deynell is trying to git her. He has been making eyes to her, or thryin' to, fer a long time. He fell in love with her whin she was nursin' her mother at one of his hospitals. Bad ces: to him for a quack. The gallows will never have its due till it gets him."

"Begorra, an' it's right you are; but tell me, did you ever hear tell of Deynell and Bat Mooney colloquin' together?"

"I did. I seen them together onct."

"You did, then; an' where was it, darlin'?"

"Sure, an' it was out beyond Mark's woods an' the 'Cademy road. The doctor he were settin' in his gig, an' Bat were a-standin' chattin' at the wheel, an' they was talkin' close like, confaydental as ould cronies. 'The Lord made an' the devil matched them,' I sez to myself, as I passed by. 'Justice won't be done till they are both put where the dogs won't bite them.'"

Barney suddenly resumed his headgear that he had removed on entering the hut, and started

for the door, saying: "Good-bye, Nora; I must go to the city and see Bat Mooney. I may be gone a week. Good-bye."

"Sure, an' he is in a bit of a hurry now," Nora said to herself, as she stood in the low doorway and watched her husband until he disappeared among the great rocks of the quarry.

The roaring city, with its hurrying crowds and blazing shop-windows, had many attractions for Barney, but he allowed nothing to make him forget the purpose for which he had come. His first move was to hunt up a policeman whom he had known years before. After a little search the officer was found, and Barney told him that he wanted to find Bat Mooney. The policeman was acquainted with Mooney, and willing to give his address, but he first asked: "What do you want him for, Barney? Is there any harm in yer errand?"

Barney assured him that there was none, and then the officer's reserve melted, and he said: "Yer just in time, Barney; another week an' ye would be too late. Mooney is at his sister's, in H Court, No. 413."

Barney lost no time in reaching H Court, and, after walking along a narrow close, he reached the last house in the row. It was a malodorous, dingy place, and Barney did not knock at the door, but passed along the little alleyway to the rear, and, stepping down a few steps, looked in at the basement door. Within a wholesome-faced woman was washing. Barney recognized her as Bat's

sister at once, and called out, "How are ye, Mary Ann Mooney; how is yer good health?"

"Is that you, Barney Foley?" the woman exclaimed, hurrying to welcome him.

"It is; an' how is Bat to-day?"

"Very low; the Father is with him within," the sister answered.

"What ails him?"

"He was shot in a saloon brawl six months ago. The bullet is in his spine, an' he is paralyzed from his hips down. Sorra is the day for 'im," and Mary moved toward the next room and opened the door, saying as she did so, "Bat, here is Mr. Foley; you know him?"

Barney entered the little room, and all he could distinguish at first, in the half light, was a gentle-faced priest standing by the window; but as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he saw the man he sought, lying on a pallet of straw.

Bat Mooney was greatly changed. The skin on his fleshless face was tightly drawn, and his sunken eyes looked sadly at the visitor. His bowed head wagged on his thin neck in recognition, but he could not put out a hand of welcome, though he essayed to do so. A whisper came from his cracked lips, "How are you, Barney?"

"I'm well, and sorry you're so sick," said his visitor.

All the rasp was out of Foley's weather-beaten voice. It flowed like the pouring of oil, so kindly was it.

"I'm nearly done, Barney."

"Yis, Bat, me boy, ye are so. Are ye ready for the flittin'?"

"I do n't know—I hope so."

"Have ye any burden on your sowl?"

"Many of 'em; but it's too late now."

Barney leaned over the little bed, and, looking steadily into the sick man's eyes, he said, "Bat, tell me why ye lied against Beverly Ronan."

A look of wonder and terror whitened the wan face of the patient; his eyes seemed to look inward; a lump rose in his throat. Mary Ann rushed forward with a glass of cordial; and after a moment the poor wretch managed to say: "I was paid to do it, Foley. Why I was hired I do n't know."

"Who engaged you to do the deed?" Barney asked.

"I won't tell that," the dying one replied. "I'll only confess Bat Mooney's sins. Be it on his head. I have enough transgressions of me own to answer for; every one must stand alone at last."

"Did you put the queer money in his satchel?" "the Minty" asked.

"Yes; I met him on the train, coming from school. I threw my coat on his valise, and, while he was at the water-tank, I slipped the money in and fastened the bag. It was easy to do it."

"And about the pocket?" said Barney.

"I was a smooth pickpocket, ye know; and in the crush at the gate I put it in his clothes. That was as easy as the other."

"Bat"—and Barney again bent over the shrunken figure—"do n't you go out with this

crime on your head; I would n't if I were you. You can't make your sowl in this condition. Fling the cursed life from you altogether; your feet are in the cowl'd river now. Go out clane."

"O, Barney!" the sick man exclaimed, his voice rising to a shrill whisper, "I am a beast. I was base-born, and my blood ran foul from my birth. I never had a chance in life. The alley was my playground, the saloon my home. The scheme was set up against me from the start."

"Bat, will you swear to what you jest told me?"

"I wil', ready enough. I don't want to die with this weight on my mind."

In a moment Barney had left the room, and was hurrying down the street, and the sick man was alone, save for the gentle, kind-faced priest, who was kneeling by the bedside, his hands enfolding a crucifix, and his eyes closed in prayer.

A hour had elapsed, when Barney returned with an attorney, a notary, and a policeman. The oath of the dying man was taken, and again Barney and the confessor were left alone together in the little room. The sick man's eyes were closed, and an expression of peace had spread over his worn features. Barney bade him farewell; but the white eyelids were scarcely lifted, and the whispered "Good-bye, Barney," was almost inaudible. "Bat" was thinking, and his thoughts were far away. He was done with all the sun looks on.

The two men stepped into the next room, and, after Barney had said farewell to Mary, they

passed on into the narrow, dirty street. Their way lay together for some blocks, and as they walked on, Barney put a question to his priestly companion.

"Father," he said, "I suspicion a man at the bottom of this deviltry. Do you think an evil-eyed, underminin' runnegade could love a pure-minded little lass? Sure, her face an' her speech 'ud make ye think of a dewy mornin' in June, when the fairies have decked themselves fer a dance an' throwed some o' their jewels on the grass."

The native poetry in Barney's untutored soul must needs find utterance occasionally, and the priest seemed an appreciative listener. At any rate, he answered the poor man by his side very gravely.

"It is not unlikely," he replied. "This love may be his one redeeming virtue. No person is all bad, or all good. We talk of the sheep and the goats as if humanity could be banded in two distinct flocks. But there is a strain of goat in every sheep, and a touch of sheep in every goat. I have never seen a man totally wicked, or altogether righteous. 'Tis one of nature's compensations that she loves to strike a balance, and make up for the lack by strengthening what remains.

"True for you, Father," said Barney. "I've noticed it meself. Whinever I get two muskrats in me trap in the swamp, if one av 'em is smailer 'n the ither, the ither is sure to be bigger. 'Tis truth you're tellin'."

At the next corner their ways separated, and



## The Home of the Ronans 53

the priest said farewell, with a kindly smile. Barney hastened to the State's Attorney as soon as he could find where his office was situated. In spite of "the Minty's" uncouth appearance, he was ushered into the presence of the attorney. He showed his papers to the lawyer, who seemed somewhat surprised, and pleased also, for he liked Ronan. He said, "I am going to Washington to-morrow. I will lay the case before the President, and clinch it with my plea for his release."

When the matter had been brought to the President's notice, an hour's consideration and a few telegrams convinced him that all was straight, and so he signed the pardon.

## CHAPTER IV.

### Prison Doors are Opened

**J**UST before Colonel Satterlee left Washington he received a letter, saying that his old friend, John Brierly, had gone into politics, and had secured the position of warden of the State Prison at C—.

This was news, indeed; and the Colonel's thoughts turned to the past, when he and John—or Jack, as he was always called—had been boys together. Pleasant memories crowded through his brain, the faces of old friends smiled at him from the vacancy of his room—a well-loved group, long since scattered.

The letter, telling of Jack's good luck in winning the honorable and lucrative position, made him glad. Success had come to his boyhood friend, and he could not do other than rejoice. After all, no friendships are as firm as those of youth. Fires can not consume nor floods destroy, distance sever or age slacken the bond that binds those who have been comrades when their hearts were fresh and youthful.

As the Colonel held the letter in his hand, he was thinking of his old school days, and of Jack—Jack, with his abounding wit and exuberant zeal.

And with thoughts of him returned their rosy visions of the future. He remembered the radiant prophecies of each other's success, and Jack's hopes of fame and wealth for both of them. What aerial castles they had builded, firmament high, fearlessly rearing pillar and lintel, cornice and cope, to the topmost turret, while all the kindly spirits that lackey innocence had cheered him in the congenial task, and had cried rapturously to the capstone, "Grace unto it; grace unto it!" Now, in years later, grace it had none. His dreams and Jack's forecasts had never come true, and each stately edifice had slaked, like a heap of lime, into a shapeless cairn.

All this and more flitted through memory's alcoves as he pondered the past. But at length the letter in his hand recalled him from his musings, for it contained a cheery invitation to spend a week at C——, and to visit the institution. C—— was on his homeward way, and he resolved to visit Jack, and asked Philip to accompany him.

Three days later the Colonel and Philip Ellis were sitting with the warden in the spacious office of the prison. The two old friends were talking of bygone years, seemingly forgetful of the young man, who sat a quiet and interested listener at a little distance from them. After talking thus for some time, recalling neighbors, living and dead, telling of merry holidays and stirring adventures long forgotten, and asking, "Do you remember?" fifty times at least, Jack rose, and asked his two visitors to follow him.

He showed them the vast penal institution

within the gray walls, with its iron gates and steel cells, its workshops and quarry, its cooking-house and pantry, and its dungeons for solitary confinement.

As they watched two somber lines of criminals lock-stepping to dinner, a county sheriff brought in a group of condemned offenders, shackled together. Ellis went with them down the corridor to the iron gate, to study their faces as the riveted door shut them in for life. The old men had impassive features, a few of the younger ones laughed brazenly, and one youthful wrong-doer wept. The handcuffs were removed, and a deputy marched them off to the barber-shop to be cropped and weighed. While the warden signed the sheriff's receipts for the iniquitous crew, Phil still followed them, and listened to the questions put by the Recorder. When the young man, who alone seemed ashamed of his disgrace, was asked the names of his parents, he refused to answer, saying, "I won't tell that."

"You must," said the writer, "or go to the solitary till you do."

He was silent a moment, and then said, "I do n't want them to be crushed with my trouble."

An older companion whispered, "Give any names."

Then the youth said, "Joe Bowers and Sally Bowers," and the squad laughed at the sorry jest.

The warden and his visitors were returning to the office, and the Colonel was trying to shut out the abysmal misery of it all by cheerful conversa-

tion when a "trusty" entered, bearing a mail-bag, and laid a heap of letters on the warden's desk. Jack picked up a long official envelope from among the others, opened it, and drawing out a legal document, said to Philip, "Did you ever see the signature of the President of the United States?"

"No, sir," Philip answered.

"There it is; look at it," returned the Warden.

Philip scanned the autograph a moment, and then asked, "What is the purport of this paper?"

"It is a pardon for a United States prisoner. You see, our Nation has not sufficient accommodation for all its felons, and consequently some are farmed out to States that have room for them at so many dollars a year per head.

"Jail officers believe that one out of every ten convicts is innocent," continued the warden; "and here is a case in point. This young man, Beverly Ronan, was accused of counterfeiting. Spurious money was found on his person. He offered no defense, and so was convicted and sent up for twelve years. Now, after two years, evidence is found which proves that he was not guilty. This evidence has been laid before the President, who has sent his pardon at once."

"Does the man expect it?" Philip asked.

"No; he knows nothing of it."

"When does it take effect?"

"Immediately; as soon as I read it to him, he has his liberty."

"Warden, will you grant me a favor?"

"Certainly, Mr. Ellis; name it."

"I like to study the human face when swept by great joy. Permit me to break the good news to the man, will you? I shall enjoy it hugely."

"Assuredly."

"Where is he now?"

"He is in the library. He assists the chaplain by caring for the books and distributing them. He is our telegrapher also. Step here, and you can see him."

Captain Ellis looked, and saw a stalwart youth of twenty-four years, whose striking manliness of face and figure contrasted strongly with the shameful stripes he wore. He was sitting, with his elbow upon his desk, his brow resting meditatively upon his hand; and despite his clipped hair and coarse garb it was evident that he was a student, as he rose to attend to some duty. Ellis marked him as a man of fortitude and a high, free spirit. His elastic step and athletic figure compelled attention; and men would stop to study him on the street, wishing they had his physical inheritance.

The warden struck a bell, and said to the "trusty" who answered his summons, "Tell No. 713 to come to me at once." He then turned to Philip, and said: "You will break the good news to him, and use some care in doing so. Excessive joy is sometimes overpowering."

As No. 713 entered the office, it was evident that he was disturbed at the summons. Apparently he was expecting a reprimand. The warden said simply, "Ronan, this gentleman desires to speak to you."

The prisoner, with a look of mingled wonder and sadness, fixed his eyes upon Ellis, and stood waiting.

Philip rose and, advancing toward him, asked, "Is your name Beverly Ronan, and are you from Delhurst, in the State of Illinois?"

"Yes, sir."

"That being so, I have a paper for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, for you. It is of chief importance, and bears the signature of the President of the United States."

Amazement lighted the pale face of the convict for an instant, and his spirit kindled with the fire of hope, while inviolable sincerity shone in his deep, dark eyes. As if tightening the curb chain on his leaping soul, he said, quietly, and his voice dropped a semi-tone: "May I ask what the document is, sir?"

Ellis looked fixedly into the man's eyes, to steady him, and answered, gently, "Mr. Ronan, it is a pardon."

A great hope clutched his heart and whitened his face, his nostrils dilated, and his lips twitched nervously, turning livid as the blood left them.

"A pardon!" he gasped, and, with unutterable pathos, he continued: "You are not trifling with me, sir? You would not do that?" And his voice vibrated with the intensity of his feeling.

"No, sir; here is the official paper, signed, sealed, and delivered—a pardon for you, full and complete. At this very moment you are no more a prisoner than I."

As bursts a dyke when a swollen mountain river shoulders at it, so his self-restraint went out before the flood of his unutterable joy. His strong figure, swaying like a sapling in a storm, would have fallen but for Philip's supporting hand. In a moment, however, he recovered himself, and stood, gazing wistfully through the open door to the river beyond the wide gateway, where a sentry with loaded rifle kept guard. Then, turning to the warden, he asked: "Have I now the liberty to go out there? May I pass unharmed?"

Before the deputy could answer, Philip linked his arm in that of the convict, saying, "Come."

And the warden made a sign to the sentinel, who stood aside to let them pass. Through the great arch of the gateway and across the road they went, over the lawn, far down to the river's edge. Philip could feel his companion thrill as he looked at the clear stream, cuffed into opalescent ripple by the wind, and as he pastured his hungry eyes on the distant hills that sloped away to the cloud-flecked sky. Suddenly he broke away, ran twenty paces along the bank, stopped, and, facing the far shore, with lifted hands, flung from heart and lips the shout: "O God, I am free! I am free! I am free!" And as the hollow woods tossed back the echo of his thrice-repeated cry, he sat down on the grass, and wept like a little child.

After this burst of emotion the two young men walked slowly back to the prison, and Ronan asked, "When will it be possible for me to go home?"

"The train starts at five o'clock," the other re-



plied, "and so you will have several hours in which to get ready for your journey. The State will furnish you with a railroad ticket, a suit of civilian's apparel, and ten dollars. These are yours by law."

An hour later, Beverly Ronan came into the office. The vulgar stripes had been laid aside, and his tall figure presented as fine a specimen of stalwart manhood as one would find in a week's search. He asked permission to say farewell to some of the men whom he was leaving. The warden willingly gave his consent, and Philip, at Ronan's request, accompanied him to share in his new-found happiness.

Together they sought out a few friendly criminals, chiefly young men whom Beverly had tried to reform. Their stolid faces softened a little at his parting words, and as he left one after another, their eyes followed him with a strange, wistful look. Perhaps Ronan's example and endeavor to help had not been entirely in vain.

A message had to be sent to the mother at Delhurst, and Beverly sat down to the telegraph key and ticked a message that was sweeter to her than the harps of heaven could ever be; for it read: "Your son is free. Tell Barbara."

While the message was being sent, Philip was standing near the rattling instrument, and, noticing a book lying near at hand, he lifted it, and saw that it was a text-book—Vinet's "Pastoral Theology." He curiously asked, "Is this your recreation?"

The message was finished and Beverly rose,

saying, as he did so: "O no. You must understand that I was, when arrested, a student for the ministry, at home on my summer vacation. I was almost through my college course. It was hard for me to give it up, and—well, I did n't give it up entirely; for an inner voice whispered that my name would be cleared some day, and so I have studied here. As my duties occupied only a part of my time, the chaplain obtained the warden's permission for me to read the books which he brought me occasionally. In this way I have kept pace with my class, studying the same books, and I could graduate with my classmates now that my reputation is clear of evil. I must lose that honor, however. Commencement-day at the college comes next month. O that I might be among the theologues, as I once was! But I must bear my burden, and it will be for the best."

For a moment a shadow darkened his face; the jaw was squared, and the sense of injury kindled vindictive fires in the windows of the soul; but they died away in the happy light that freedom had brought to his eyes. There was one more place to be visited before his departure. It was the hospital. A few wretched creatures said farewell to him with a smile for his happiness and an inward pang because they would miss his visits and his uplifting influence in the dreary, hopeless days of the future.

He talked long with an old man, Hahn by name, a consumptive burglar, who had been hardened by years of crime; and yet, as the young man bent over the bed and talked with him, it was evident

that there was a soul under that mean bodily covering, and that Beverly Ronan had found the way to it. The penitent thief had just finished a letter, and he gave it to Beverly with faltering hands, saying: "Open that after I am dead. I heard your pardon had come. I knew it would. God bless you!"

In the meantime, from the town office, the warden had wired the President of a certain college these words: "Beverly Ronan found innocent. Pardoned by President, and now set free. Has kept up studies. Give him a chance to graduate with his class."

In forty minutes came back the reply: "President and whole college overjoyed. Let Ronan come at once to examinations and graduate with his class."

When the last farewell in the hospital had been said, and Ronan had returned to the office, the warden handed him the telegram. He read it, but said not a word at first; for his heart was overfull of thanksgiving. When at last he spoke, he said softly, as if to himself: "My night is far spent; my day is at hand."

It would be necessary, then, for him to go to the college at once, and, an hour later, Philip and he were standing at the railway station. There was time only for a friendly hand-clasp. As the train started, Beverly was saying: "Speech can not express my gratitude. I feel now that my sorrows are ended."

Alas! they were only begun.

## CHAPTER V

### Love's Young Dream

THE home of Colonel Satterlee was in Millbank, a suburb of the city of X—. Beyond the great highway and its clattering factories, amid beautiful meadows and rich pastures, was the county road on which the Colonel's home was situated—a thoroughfare so winding that it crossed Otter Creek three times in one mile.

The home itself, tucked in between two hills, an ancient stone mansion of modest size, with numerous porches, was almost hidden by firs. An orchard surrounded it, and a few oaks overtopped the fruit-trees and stood like sentinels looking out over the undulating sweep of country. An iron gate opened upon the drive; and the lawn, dotted with clumps of shrubbery, sloped to the roadside wall, which was of rubble, topped with a capping of flagstones. Some distance in the rear of the house, and invisible from the road, was a commodious barn with fenced yard. All the place seemed well kept. It was evident that the tenant—Michael Downey—had earned his wages by faithfully caring for the estate during the war.

There was a stir of preparation for the landlord's arrival; for the Colonel was on his way home. On the day of his expected return, Downey drove

to the station to meet him, and greeted him with genuine Milesian exuberance.

As the Colonel and Philip were driven home, the older man pointed out the various farms of his neighbors, occasionally asking Michael a question as to what changes had occurred during his absence.

When the carriage swung through the gateway into the drive, the Colonel's daughter came running down the walk to meet them. The hound—Pluto—bounded after her, leaping and barking, along the brick walk. Downey had scarcely pulled the horses in when the Colonel leaped over the wheel, and father and child were folded in a warm embrace. Edith was saying:

"At last! At last! O how happy I am! Safe at home, unharmed. Sometimes I feared I would never see you again."

The driver took the Captain up to the porch, and as he alighted, the father and daughter came up the steps. Ellis thought, as he was introduced to the fair hostess, that he had rarely seen a lovelier woman; but his opinion in the matter would be worth little, for he had been a stranger to society, and knew little of women. Every one of the sex was comely to him, and all were good, yet he was somewhat diffident in approaching them; so he stood at "attention," hat in hand, and bowed rather awkwardly as she said:

"And this is Captain Ellis. Father wrote me that he owed his life to you. I wish I could command some gracious words to acknowledge the great debt we all owe you."

■

"He overstates the case, Miss Satterlee. I merely helped him off the field when he was badly injured. It was the commonest kind of a service, and any humane man could have done no less."

"Well," she retorted, archly, and a smile flitted across her exquisite face, "I am afraid I must accept my father's version of the story. We shall try to show our gratitude while you are here. I hope that you will feel that you are very welcome to our home. Please be seated, and your baggage will be taken to your room. You must try to fill the place of my brave brother, who fell at Fair Oaks."

At that moment a tall lady in black emerged from the great doorway and came toward them. Edith rose and said:

"This is my aunt, Mrs. Redmond, papa's sister, who keeps house for us and looks after me when he is away."

Philip bowed to a rotund, capable matron, who eyed him sharply, yet not unkindly, as he stole furtive glances at her niece.

While Mrs. Redmond chatted affably, Ellis managed to study the girl quite closely, remembering Major Marley's warning. The Colonel had joined the group after a short conference with Downey, and, as his daughter stood by his chair, ruffling his iron-gray hair with her slender fingers, she made a winsome picture indeed, full of instinctive fascination. She was slightly below the medium height and weight—a very graceful figure. Her heavy blonde hair waved slightly over her low, broad forehead, and the stray locks turned to

gold under the touch of the sun. Her eyes were clear azure, gentle and bright as a sunlit well. A moderately straight nose, with lips firm and full, completed a face of most unusual attractiveness. She was wearing a white dress; and a cluster of scarlet flowers at her waist gave just the necessary touch of color.

That unelucidated influence which men have agreed to call "charm" followed her every motion, as the obligato keeps pace with the tune. Her placid artlessness was winsome.

A smile chased away a dash of tears as her father told of his wound; and for a moment the white hand on his head had paused in its caressing—but only for a moment.

Ellis soon discovered, as every one who knew the Colonel's daughter could not fail to learn, that, in spite of her numerous attractive qualities there was one that was strikingly prominent. It was her voice. So sweet was it, so full of rich tones and rippling semi-tones, that the young soldier thought, as he listened, "Surely, she has suffered much." Her face was unlined, and her form was erect; but her accents had a scope, a fullness of musical modulations such as ring the bells in the listener's soul when slave melodies are heard. As a wind stirs an Æolian harp set in a mullioned window, so her voice seemed to vibrate under the influence of her spirit's slightest manifestation, and follow it through all its sinuosities.

"It would make a sonneteer out of a section hand," one of her friends often said.

"I hope," Ellis soliloquized, while Mrs. Red-

mond was speaking, "that Marley never wins her. It would be the mating of a dove and a buzzard. I'll do nothing to forward the match, that is settled." His soliloquy was interrupted at this juncture by Michael, who appeared to conduct the visitor to his room, an apartment on the second floor, near the Colonel's.

After supper that evening, Philip retired early, being weary, and desiring a chance to rest and think. "I'll not stay here long," he cogitated, when alone. "If I do, I'll make a fool of myself with this lady. There is a charm about her that I can not resist. Perhaps I might win her in a fair race with Marley; but I have no home or civic standing, no profession or wealth, not even a pedigree. I am a nobody—do n't even know my parentage. My ancestry is a cipher with the rim rubbed out, while she comes from a fine English family and is heiress to the Colonel's riches. She shows her fine ancestry in every movement. What would n't a man do for a woman like that? She seems daughter of a line of diademed sires. Phil Ellis, do n't be a saphead. Write to one of the boys of Company D to send you a telegram at once, calling you to his sick-bed, and then go. Do you hear? Go! O do n't be silly! She cares nothing for you, and never will. But what of that if I care for her? But do I? What ails me, I wonder! Wish the war had kept on and a bullet had struck me. No, ' do n't, either. I'm all balled up, as the teamsters say; have n't the sense of a squirrel. Well, I'll get out of here as soon as I can decently; but I won't be unmannerly.



about it. I'll stay as long as I like." Having arrived at this satisfactory conclusion, Ellis fell asleep.

The three weeks spent in the Colonel's home were wonderful in their smooth-flowing pleasure and widening of life's aspect to the young officer. Under the careless, foolhardy, roving disposition was a substratum of pure gold. Few knew it. Certainly he did not realize it himself. He had been guilty of the common mean actions of men; knew that he was coarse at times, unruly, and selfish; one or two low tricks, of no great gravity, crimsoned his brow when he thought of them, and made him fancy himself worse than other men; but these were surface flaws. The young soldier was rich in all the elements of primitive virtue, despite a kind of shy uncouthness, and worthy of any woman's esteem. Truth to tell, he had admired Edith at long range since he heard Marley's description of her, and found himself wondering if she cared for him.

"I am unfit to be here," he mused. "It is plain impertinence to occupy their time any longer. I won't stay." And yet he went not. Is not this ever the way of a man with a maid?

Philip Ellis was forty fathoms deep in love, and did not know what ailed him. He feared to ask himself the plain truth. He had come to a crisis in his life. This visit was to make or mar all his future. Sometimes a great power stirred deep in his spirit, an upheaval of something striving to be born. Manhood's noblest self lay covered with rubbish in the man's being. A voice

within him cried, "Cast yourself into the flood; go with it where you may;" but he stood shuddering on the brink, not afraid, but bewildered. He needed just the development that a pure love would bring. Unwittingly he was yearning for that unspeakable expansion of life that comes only with the mutual devotement of man and woman. Unconsciously he was laying all of his vulgar and selfish attributes on the one great altar amid the holy flame. It was an unseen sacrifice made by a strong man in the secret place. There could be no earthly witnesses.

Day by day, walking, riding with her, he was changing. He marveled at himself, sometimes shaking with a great fear, sometimes exulting inwardly.

It was the breaking of life's seal, and all its fiery wine was poured out. The very sky had vaster breadth, the grass a tenderer green.

O, this mystery of sex! The deepest of all deeps, highest of all heights, plucking open the secret cells of life! A spiritual thing mainly; for man and woman differ in the essence of their souls. As language hungers for music to bear it; as music yearns for words to clothe it, so the soul of man unto that of woman ever crieth its voiceless prayer. Does not woman's spirit reflect one side of the Deity, and man's the other? When joined, do they not, in mutual peace, mirror the Divine? And, if parted, how deep the abyss, how measureless the loss!

Philip vaguely felt these longings, and he could not go away. He remembered hearing a scholar

say, "No one can tell what a man will do for the woman he loves." The saying was enigmatical at the time, but crystal clear now.

One evening the lovers sat together in a summer-house overlooking the road. Day was declining into the husk of darkness like a lily into its sheath. Edith had been singing an old ballad which made his heart fountains leap, to a guitar accompaniment; and Philip, as he watched her and listened to her voice in the half-light, was dreaming. Of all Love's speeches, silence is most eloquent. Tranced, he heard the lazy wash of summer seas on shelving silver sands, the tinkle of a fern-hid rill over pebbled shoals, a dawn-waked robin piping to his sleepy mate, a flute-note on a mountain lake. From Millbank came the laughter of children dancing at evening on the green and chanting the ancient chorus, "London Bridge is falling down, falling down, and we are passing under," as they circled, hand in hand. The moon came up over the shoulder of a hill, and laid panels of light across the lawn between the trees.

The music and the glamour of the night conspired with every other influence of the time and place to lure them into the cosmic march. Faintly about them flowed the strophes of the stars.

The fireflies wove mystic flame-patterns through the purple dusk, and the fragrance of clover lay on the warm air. A night-hawk shuffled down the wind, a cowbell chimed far away, and the water falling over the milldam murmured ceaselessly its sibilant cadence, softly roughing summer's voluptuous languor. A whip-poor-will fluted in a

corpse close at hand, and Phillip, being led he knew not whither, asked Edith, "How came that sadness into your young voice?"

"Sadness?" she said.

"Yes; not in the words, but in the tone. Have you seen much grief?"

Every syllable seemed to carry an increment of pathos sweet as the ninefold harmonies of antique lore, like joy and pain alternating through every strain.

"Not much; less than most women. But my mother suffered greatly. I think I inherit her voice, from what father has told me. Her life was like a beatitude of spring-time, full of gracile birches and water rippling under alder shade, embroidered on a cerecloth."

"Where did she die?"

"In this house."

"How old were you?"

"I was about five years old."

"Do you remember her?"

"Yes; I have a nebulous memory of her. I was led to her bedside and told that she was dying. I recall a pale face framed in brown hair, and large gray eyes looking wistfully into mine. She was too weak to speak much; but her eyes gave me a parting benediction, and she said a few words, sad as a dove's call when taboring beside a deserted tomb."

"Her burial was near here, I suppose?"

"Yes, I can never forget that scene. It was in the old graveyard not far away on yonder hill. I did not know then what I had lost. I have

learned since, a long, long lesson. Often I go to the mound and sit there in the summer-time. I wish she had lived till I could repay some of her renunciation for me."

"The hurt has not yet healed?" he asked, gently.

"No; it grows sorer all the time. It will never heal in this world. I should not mourn for I have father. He has tried to be everything to me."

Silence fell again, and both were thinking. At length Edith asked, "Has there been much trouble in your life?"

"There has been little else," he replied.

"Would you mind telling me about it?"

"I should be only too glad to do that; but, after all, there is not much to tell. My homelessness as I grew up and the desire to know about my people have been my worst trials."

"Do you know anything of your parents?"

"Nothing about my father; but I have learned that my mother died at sea, when coming from Wales, and that she was buried in the ocean. I was sent, as a child, to an Orphan's Home, and have had a joyless life. Only in the army did I find any happiness."

"But, Mr. Ellis, that cheerless time is past, and the future is bright."

"On the contrary, it is darker than the past. I would rather go back than go on."

"What do you mean?" she asked. "You have youth and talent and friends."

"Who are the friends?"

"You have our family at least."

"Yes," he acknowledged, with a smile.

Again they were silent in meditation. A beetle droned and bumped on the floor, and a nestling chirped in the thick leaves. The moon shook off her hood of cloud, and all the valley lay transfigured in the radiant light.

The man and woman were delivered into each other's hands. From afar they were drawn together by destiny. As the fire of Philip's pure passion burned, it consumed the cords that had kept his highest nature bound. Something within his soul seemed to rise up and fling all the wretched past from him. "I can offer nothing of that," he thought; "all must be holy." And he put it away utterly and forever. The Divine way of destroying evil in a human soul is to burn it up by the flame of an all-consuming desire.

He was surprised, on looking across at her, to see a tear on her cheek. Pity is neighbor to Love; and Philip Ellis was mastered, for he felt that it was the destined moment. The shadow on the dial of his fate turned backward from that hour. Well he realized that, as was the depth of his manhood, so was the height of her womanhood. Could he ascend to it? "Try," his heart urged, "try!" He rose and came close to her.

"Edith!" His voice broke, but he steadied it. "Edith, there is one blessing that would light all my future."

"What is it, Philip?" she asked, gently.

"It is you."

"I?"

"You, Edith. Heaven help me, I have only a

poor man's heart and hand to offer; but they shall both serve you while life endures."

The girl bowed her head, and he went on, his voice vibrant with feeling, "I will give you time, Edith, for a decision—all the time you want." Her face was lifted, illumined, as she said: "I need no time, Philip."

"You accept my heart and hand now?" he asked, almost too happy to believe it could be true.

"Both," she answered; and he felt a soft hand laid in his, as he leaned down for the kiss that sealed their compact. With the meeting of the lips, as heart with heart was joined in union, life's highest level was won.

A long time they sat there, saying little. Once he spoke. "I have lived all my days for this hour," he said. As they walked toward the house, Edith said, "Life seems to have a meaning now;" and for answer he took her hand in his.

The Colonel sat, smoking, on the veranda, and Ellis resolved to tell him at once. Hand in hand they went to him, and Philip said:

"Colonel, you little knew what you were doing for me when you invited me to your home."

"A little in return for what you did for me at Chancellorsville," the older man replied.

"I hope I have not abused your trust in me."

"In what way?"

"I have asked your daughter to be my wife."

"You have? And what was her answer?"

"She has given me her promise," replied Ellis, looking down at the little figure at his side.

"Well," said the Colonel, as a smile broke over his face, "perhaps you folks think this is news to me. I am not blind. I saw it coming, and it suits me well."

"Thank you, Colonel, thank you," returned the Captain; "I shall live to see that you never regret this hour."

"O," replied the Colonel, "during the last few weeks I have lived over my youth in merry England, where I won her mother long ago." And his face grew grave as he spoke. When they left him, he sighed deeply, and continued to brood on the years that were recorded in the archives of the past.

A most lovable human soul was this veteran, and the fame of his odd, kindly ways had gone out through all the borough.

Though born in Britain and proud of the exalted history of Albion, he was more patriotic in his devotion to the banner of our great Republic than many of her sons to the manor born. He regarded his country as trustee for unborn generations, holding in sacred stewardship the principles on which rest the inalienable rights of man.

Every Fourth of July he purchased about half a wagon load of firecrackers, and at eight of the morning of our Nation's natal day he distributed them to the boys and girls who came for miles to receive them. Hundreds of young hearts were made happy by the noisy offering which he laid annually on the altar of Young America.

"It's the best use you can put powder to," he often said. "The small folks will never forget



the fun, and a few fingers more or less will never be missed in the final round-up."

On the night of that explosive day he gave the elders a great treat also. For their delight he bought stacks of fireworks of every description, and it surely was a fine picture to see his lawn and all the wide road black with the mill folk and the farm hands who had come to enjoy the free show. For three hours the bengal lights illuminated the sky, the pin-wheels whizzed, the chasers snapped, the red fire glowed, and the old man lighting two Roman candles and sweeping the twin besoms about his head as he twined the streams of golden sparks spouting into the air was worth going to see. And when a rocket trailed its glory into the upper heaven, and burst into a shower of blue and crimson stars, he was greatly delighted to hear the people shout. The men cheered and the children crowed their joy, and the boys admired the amiable theorist who never forgot his own youth. When he caught them stealing pears or peaches from his orchard, he had a queer way of clearing his throat, hemming and coughing to give them warning; and though he could run like a quarter horse for a short distance, he was never known to overtake a lad in a race. There was always a fence at need, over which the fugitive could whirl and beyond which the Colonel could not venture. Four times a day, when the fruit was falling in the grass, the tanned vagabonds would march up the walk and ask for some of the freshly-gathered harvest. Invariably a crock full of red-streaked globes was set out, and they were bidden to help them-

selves. When his sister, the housekeeper, protested against his lavish generosity, he would retort: "It takes a heap of apoles to wad a boy. I know, and you do n't. I was a boy once myself, and would n't be anything else, if I had my way about it."

There was a tradition that a boy who had the privilege of pasture for one muley in his orchard was caught up an apple-tree, filling his jacket. When the soldier saw him in the branches, he asked, mildly, "What are you doing up there, sonny?"

"I am looking for my cow, sir," said the grinning cub. And he reported at the bunk afterward that the Colonel laughed all the way to his house.

He told Michael, his man, that no buttermilk or skimmed milk was to be fed to the pigs, as other farmers were in the habit of doing.

"Tell the children at the Lower Bank to come up and get it every day. And if they pocket some fruit by the way, you can be studying the scenery, which is helpful at any time. Commune with nature in silence till they are gone. And see that Pluto is tied. Make sure of that."

The night of his betrothal, Philip awoke about one in the morning, with a sense of danger heavy upon him. Vague alarms sent a shudder through his whole being. He arose, went to a window overlooking the valley, and looked long at the country below. The sense of foreboding which filled his soul seemed like a presentiment.

The dog, Pluto, whined and whined in his kennel. All the farms lay asleep. How very still

they were! Suddenly a pistol shot rang out, and one long cry came down the valley. It was the inarticulate but distant call of one in deadly peril, and seemed to come from a great distance, with an imperative summons. Again everything was silent, and, although Ellis waited for another sign, none came. At length he went to bed, to toss in uneasy slumber until morning. He dreamed he was needed by one in dire distress, but knew not where to go.

He was awakened by a loud knock at his door, and heard Mrs. Redmond say: "Hurry, Mr. Ellis, hurry! Something is wrong with the Colonel."

In a few moments Philip was dressed and in the hall. "What is wrong?" he queried.

"We can get no response from Mr. Satterlee. We have knocked and called. What can be the matter?" said Mrs. Redmond, her face white and her voice troubled.

Ellis tried the door, shook it, and at last threw himself heavily against it. There was a crash as the door burst open, and then Philip was in the room, quickly followed by the housekeeper and Edith. The room was empty, and the bed had not been used that night.

"Did you see the Colonel enter the room last evening?" asked Philip.

"Yes, sir," replied Mrs. Redmond. "He spoke to me in the hall, said good night, went into his room, and I heard him lock the door."

"What time was it?"

"About eleven o'clock."

"There is foul play, I fear," said Ellis.

"What shall we do?" cried the Colonel's sister.

"Call Michael, and bid him look round the house for signs of night prowlers. Disturb nothing, but tell him to send his boy for the nearest neighbor. In the meantime, let us eat a bite of breakfast; for there is work to do."

Edith was completely prostrated, and Ellis could not cheer her.

"O," she moaned, "I shall never see him again—the dearest and best father that ever lived. O Philip, what shall I do?"

"Be strong, darling," Philip answered, pressing her hand in his. "Do n't let hope die. Wait for evidence before believing the worst."

A careful examination showed no traces of evil-doers; and all the vicinity for miles was explored in vain. The Colonel's hat was missing from the rack and his coat from the hook.

Day after day the search continued, but all to no purpose, although the whole section of the city engaged in it. Colonel Satterlee was gone.

## CHAPTER VI

### How the Medal was Won

THE school year at R—— College was almost finished. The annual oratorical contest would round out the succession of functions customary during graduation-week. Representatives from the Law and Theological Departments and from the College of Liberal Arts were to contend for the gold medal.

The night for the contest had arrived, and people were crowding into the college chapel. Carriages were coming and going, and the prominent men—judges, doctors, and professors—with their dames and damsels, were there. Across the campus, at one of the dormitory windows, stood Beverly Ronan, looking out upon the people, young and old, who were flocking into the hall. By his side stood his chum—Emory Russell. Beverly had been chosen to represent the Theological Department in the contest, and his friend was somewhat anxious as to the result. Noticing the tension of Ronan's face, he asked, "Afraid, old boy?"

"No," the other replied, "only a little bit nervous. I'll be all right when I get at it. I think best on my feet."

"Some folks seem to think best with their

feet," said Emory; and then, looking for a moment at the carriages filled with the great people of the city rolling up to the doorway, he said: "It is an honor to address such an audience. I confess it would scare me into convulsions. I would take to the tall timber and hide out till it was over."

"I know it, Emory," returned Beverly; "and if I win, Luke Ronan's hammer will clang more cheerily to-morrow in the old shop at Delhurst."

"See here, Ronan," said Emory, clapping his hand on his companion's shoulder, "so far you have only practiced your fledgling powers in country schoolhouses. You won't let this élite assembly drive you into the brush and make you fail, will you?"

"Never fear, mate," and Beverly lifted his broad shoulders, and, turning from the window, tossed back the blonde hair from his forehead. The lamplight fell full upon his splendid physique. The shapely head was set upon a columnar neck. His arms were overlaid with coils of muscles which had been toughened at his father's forge, and his whole sinewy figure showed six feet two inches of potent manhood. His face was as sincerely candid as a summer dawn, and yet strong, almost severe, with its massive outlines in rest. But when his great heart flooded his face with emotion, the mouth grew tender, the eyes soft as a gazelle's, and that nameless spell called magnetism, which clothed him like a garment, had gained for him unchallenged leadership among the thirty theologues of the college.

"Strange," he said half to himself, as he

leaned against the window frame, "how a fellow's folks brace his heart in his trying hours! I read of a noted man who wrought marvels of speech, swaying multitudes, and smiting every wire of that hundred-stringed harp, and who nerved himself by whispering as he rose before the people, 'Tis for the bairn's bread.' Of course, I shall earn no bread to-night, but, as 'man does not live by bread alone,' I'll earn some soul sustenance for the home folks that will be sweeter than honey out of the rock. How happy Barbara will be!" And from somewhere over his heart Beverly drew the picture of a girl, quite young, with a pure, sweet face, crowned by heaped braids of dark, glossy hair. "She will be at father's to-morrow to hear the news. Unless all my powers fail, she shall go home rejoicing. Come, Em., there's the bell. Let us go. I am in fine fettle now."

Arm in arm the two comrades crossed the campus. The serene stars crept stilly out. Luna flashed her shallows of silver across the world, and the crisped cloud waves curled in filigree ripples around the shadows that lay like islands in the reaches of the light. Above the hum of conversation from the windows of the lighted chapel came the lilt of the orchestra.

At the rear door of the hall the comrades parted. "Courage, Ronan," said Emory. "I know you will win. We are all sure of that."

And so heartening his friend, Emory went to take his place in the audience. Beverly entered in time to step to the platform with the other two

men who were to contend for the coveted prize offered for superior eloquence in the annual contest of the great school.

Surely, the audience was one to inspire any orator. In the center of the room sat the Faculty, grave and scholarly. The students were seated in groups, to cheer their respective champions. Back of the Faculty sat the judges—eminent men, fitted for the work. The remainder of the great hall was filled with guests. It was the climacteric event of the season. Scores of famous men and jeweled women had come from far because of personal interest in the school or in its contestants. The chivalry and beauty of the rich city were there also. Plumed fans winnowed the scented air, fair heads bowed in delicious expectancy, laughing eyes tossed greetings far around. In hair and bosom hung tremulous buds, and heaped baskets of flowers lay banked across the back of the room, waiting to be borne by curly-haired and silver-buckled pages to the favorites.

A few minutes after the contestants had taken their seats upon the platform, and while the palm fronds were still shaking with the last musical burst, the chancellor stepped forward, and announced that the orator for the Law Department would be the first speaker.

His theme was "The Genius of American Institutions." He was a natural speaker, of a noted and wealthy family, and was known to be a spend-thrift, wasting his glorious dower of talents in social pleasure and coarse dissipation. His dark, scornful face lit with pleasure at the applause



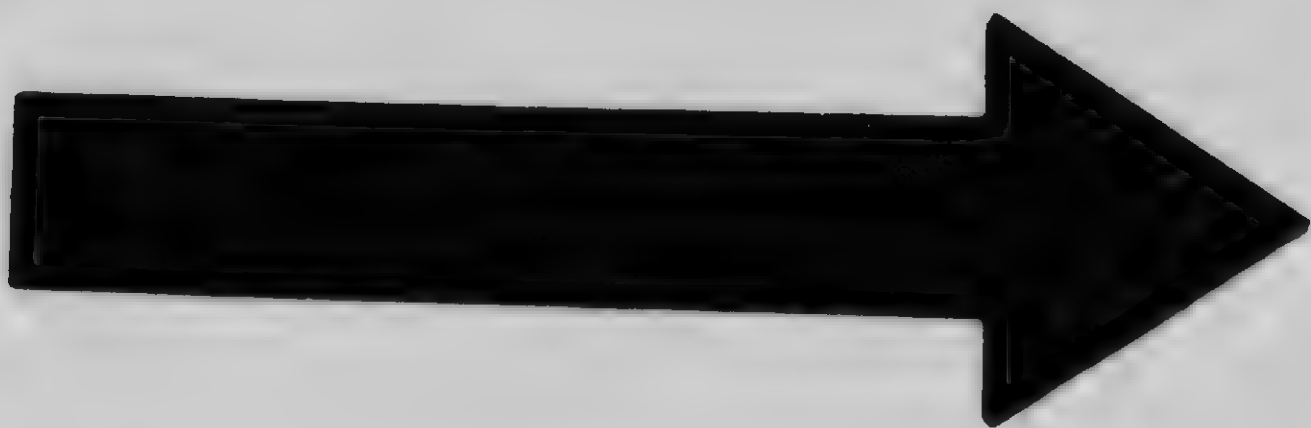
which greeted him as he came forward. Slowly he began, and, warming with his theme, his undeniable power became manifest. Step by step he climbed the terraces of his stately argument, bearing the audience aloft with him, higher, higher, till on the topmost height, with fine effect, he flung the banner of liberty to the wind, and shook it grandly in the thunderburst of applause that drowned the climax of his speech.

The patriotic heart leaped with joy, and the pages were loaded with flowery tokens of gratulation, while the theologues eyed each other dubiously, and bent their eyes upon Ronan.

The second orator, Preston Morgan, from the College of Liberal Arts, was so courteously refined that every student loved him. As Ronan watched him rise to deliver his oration upon "The Masque of Comus," he envied the superb poise and fine dignity of his rival. No gentleman, alone on his lawn among his tulip-trees, could have paced forward more calmly than he. His topic gave no opportunity for impassioned utterance, but his polished shafts of speech, drawn from a well-stocked mental quiver, went singing through the hush that brooded over the house. And when he ceased, every generous heart went out in the prophecy, "He will be a man of might and honor."

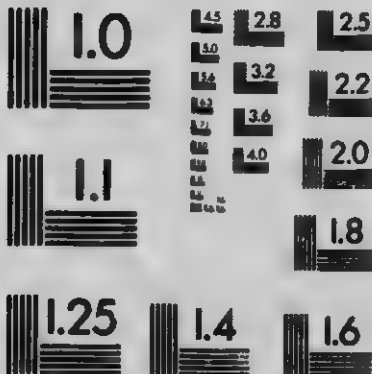
When the third speaker's theme had been duly announced, Ronan walked forward, somewhat confused. For a moment the audience seemed blurred, and his voice was husky as he stumbled into the portal of his argument.

Down to zero dropped the hopes of the theo-



# **MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART**

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

1653 East Main Street 14609 USA  
 Rochester, New York  
 (716) 482 - 0300 - Phone  
 (716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

logues. A few of them prayed, scarce daring to look at their representative. Emory Russell listened to him with set lips, and watched him make his way falteringly to the edge of his mighty thought, as a storm-drenched eagle drags its wings to the brink of a gigantic ledge.

Suddenly there was a change in the orator, as in the bird of Jove, when it shakes its pinions, and, with a scream, swims out across the abyss. Beneath the bird the gulches roar with the torrent; above, the lowering sky leans upon the peaks, and spills the blazing ore of its lightning in blinding cascades down the rocks, the echoes of the sullen thunder huddling, frightened, among the crags. Up, up, on broad vans he sails, above the clouds into the open heavens, round and round in gyres of lazulite, while every eye marks his royal flight. So it is with Ronan. He is erect now, with face glowing, heart throbbing, and soul aflame, and his strong, honest personality charms the audience. Women lean toward him, men submit to the spell, professors bend to catch the hot words that flow in eloquent periods of perfect rhythm. He seemed to imagine himself keeping time to the ringing rhyme of his father's hammer, chiming among the hills, and so he drives on. Pausing in perfect mastery, he looks the audience in the eye, and then, quivering with conscious power, he throws the riata of unsurpassable pathos in gleaming curves over every soul, and with one resistless effort lifts the whole vast assembly to the level of his last sublime appeal. He is done. The wreath is surely his. One moment of hushed re-

laxation of the tensed mind, and then the wave of applause swept him to his seat. Unquestionably he was victor.

The three grave judges retired to write their verdict. The first two contestants sat hedged with blossoms, while Beverly had none, for he was never seen in society, had no friends present outside the squad of black-coated divinity students, and they had not thought of flowers; but he waited eagerly, with eyes fixed on the floor.

In a short time the judges re-entered the room, and handed their report to the Chancellor, who rose to read it. Every auditor strained forward, the black-garbed scholars swaying together like crows in a wind-blown pine. Slowly the Chancellor said:

"I have the honor to announce that the prize has been won by Mr. Beverly Ronan."

Hurrah! Nothing could be heard for the mighty cheer that shook the rafters. And every eye was fixed upon Beverly, who dared not look up as he took the prize, and in a low tone spoke his gratitude. The contest of the year was over, and the people streamed out into the iridescent night.

The two theologues, arm-in-arm, sought the telegraph office. As they walked, Beverly said:

"Em., now that it is all over, and I have won, I can't help being glad; and yet I feel that Pres. really did the best work to-night. Did you ever see such precision and elegance; such inevitableness of speech. He is a hero, surely! I feel that I ought to give him the prize."

When they reached the telegraph-office, Beverly wrote a telegram to his old father, running thus:

"Your boy has won. Will be home soon. Tell Barbara."

And while the night operator tucked the words into the invisible pocket of the courier of the wire, and ticked off the message at the electric key, Beverly said to himself, "How happy she will be!"

That evening a lady who had listened to the three orations, wrote to her father in an Eastern city, saying: "I have seen the minister we need for our Church. Ask the Bishop to secure Beverly Ronan, of R—— College for us. I have never heard his equal. He is a modern Apollos."

By the river, in the wooded part of Southern Illinois, on the edge of Delhurst village, in a homelike, commodious cottage with wide, hospitable doors and airy rooms, a woman was busy at the work a mother loves best—making ready for the homecoming of her son.

The old locust-tree down by the gate held a thousand pyramids of polished silver up to the sky, and with every wind strewed a shower of perfume on the sward. Sunshine was spilled clear across the well-scoured floor. The rustling of the breeze in the boughs seemed to her to whisper, "He is coming, coming." The windlass of the cool old well creaked, "Coming, coming." Pink-footed barn-pigeons pirouetted, cooing, "Coming, coming;" and the smiting of the anvil across the way said, "Coming, coming home;" while brown bees, wading waist-deep in the pollened hollyhocks that

swept the window-sill, droused back the welcome tidings, "Coming, coming home."

With deft touches his room—the little bedroom near the garden—was set in order. The vine he had loved peeped in through the casement, the fleckless curtains flung cool shadows on the carpet, and his favorite books lay on the table, with his flute beside them. His pictures looked down from the walls, his fishing-rod and gun stood in a corner, his chair waited for him, and on the mantle his little clock eagerly ticked off the minutes until the stage should come.

With happy face the mother surveyed the room, and said to herself: "Everything is fixed now just as he used to like it. How flurried I am! Two years is a long time for us to be parted, and even now he'll only be with us a little while, and then the Conference will send him to his work. I wonder if he's changed—grown taller. Come in Dash, old fellow," she said, turning toward the door, where the old dog stood wagging his tail. "Come in; lie there on the rug. It is only an hour now." And then to herself again: "Even the dog knows he's coming. How good God is, after all!"

The strong religious nature of Mary Ronan overcame her as she stood there in the empty room, which had been, since he went away, her holy of holies. The fervent faith of generations of pious ancestry leaped in her soul; the blood of heroes martyred for the truth was in her; the same stream that reddened the heather of the Scottish hills surged through her heart. In this very room, twenty years ago, she had kneeled by

a cradle's side, and had dedicated her dimpled boy to God. She had taught him and trained him for this, and now her chief desire had been fulfilled.

Overcome with joy, she knelt by the white bed, and softly she prayed: "O God, he is thine, wholly thine. Dearer than the gold of all the earth to me, he is thine. From birth-hour to this day I have brought him, to offer him to thee. Take him, use him, chasten him, and strengthen him. I ask for him no success but to please thee; no honor but to serve thee; no reward but to hear thee say, Well done. If I am too happy, Lord, forgive. Thou art the Son of man—a human mother bent over thee in love and pride, and watched thee gird thyself for thy work, as I have watched him. Take him, my offering to thee, for love's sake and for thy name's sake. Amen."

The sound of galloping hoofs drew her to the window, and a smile crossed her face as she said: "Here comes Barbara Lawson. Her horse needs shoeing, I reckon. The schemer! She knows that Beverly is coming to-day—could n't wait till the boy gets here."

Barbara Lawson was a skillful rider, and the group of men in the smithy door looked at her admiringly as she called, laughingly, to the blacksmith to help her down. Luke Ronan, who was standing in the doorway, shading his eyes with his grimy hand, hurried out, greeting her in his hearty fashion: "Good-morning, Miss Barbara. All well at home? What can I do for you to-day?"

For answer, she held out her hand, and leaped as lightly as a thistle-blow to the earth; and then,



gathering up her riding-skirt in one hand, she touched the foreleg of the sorrel with her whip, and said: "Goldie has lost a shoe, Mr. Ronan. You may set another; but there is no need to hurry, as I am going to talk with your wife for awhile."

Across the road the blacksmith's wife was waiting to open the gate. Barbara patted her horse's nose lovingly, and then joined Mrs. Ronan; and together they walked along the path toward the house. On one side of the path, on a shell-rimmed mound, was an old dial that the smith had shaped on his anvil. Both of the women glanced at it, and then smiled, as the mother said, "Only sixty minutes more, and then he will be here."

As they passed a bed of pansies, the mother stopped, saying: "Pluck some of these pansies, Barbara, for your throat. He likes them, you remember."

When a handful had been gathered, the mother continued, "Come and see his room, all tidied, and just as he used to like it." And the two women passed into the cottage.

An hour later, the blare of a horn, blown far away, floated across the wheat-fields. Winding down the hill came the daily coach. On the driver's seat, lines in hand, flicking the leaders with a sinuous lash, that crackled and hissed above their tossing heads, urging them to a swift lope, sat Beverly Ronan. He called, in friendly style, to the farmers in the fields, and bade Mart, the old Jehu, blow the horn till the echoes filled all the glens of the far-off bluffs.

Willingly the team stopped, panting and tired,

in front of the smithy, and Beverly, leaping to the ground, ran first to where his mother stood, saying, in homely farm-speech, "Mammy, I'm glad to see your dear face again." The faded woman clung to the strong neck of her son, only able to say, "Beverly, my boy! my boy!"

Her very heart seemed to dissolve in tears. "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh;" but the overfull heart is silent.

The men who had gathered at the shop to greet the homecomer wiped suspicious moisture from their lashes, and even gruff Ben Leech, afterward, said that he felt a lump like a muskmelon rise in his throat, and he just had to wipe his leaky eyes.

The father came forward slowly but proudly, with a hearty word: "Welcome home, my lad! All the men are glad to see you. Shake hands all around."

When the men had been spoken to, Beverly walked across the road, for Barbara was waiting just inside the gate. He could not help noticing how rarely beautiful she was, and how well the riding-habit suited her. The wind was blowing her dark curls from beneath the little blue cap, in spite of her efforts to control them, and the same wind, or something else, had brought a glowing color to her cheeks. The long lashes swept her cheeks as Beverly walked toward her, but when he was near they were lifted, and her brown eyes, with more than laughter in their depths, looked into his. One white hand was eagerly outheld toward him, while the other clasped the folds of her long riding-habit.

"Welcome, Beverly; welcome, Rev. Mr. Ronan, A. M.," she cried, laughingly. "Welcome home again!" she repeated, radiant with joy.

"Thank you, Barbara," said he, taking her hand in both of his. "You are very good to come to-day. Just like you, though," and the old smile came into his face. "All this kindness quite overwhelms me," he continued, as his mother came near enough for him to put his arm around her waist.

When the three had reached the porch, Beverly said, "Mother, sit down, and let me feast my eyes on you."

"O no, not now," she answered, "it is almost dinner-time, and I must get an old-fashioned meal for you, I know. Talk to Barbara while I work a little."

When the young people sat for a few moments on the old clematis-covered portico, talking in low tones, Beverly drew from his pocket a plush-lined case, and laid it on her lap. As her slender fingers opened it, he said, quite boyishly, "I won the prize, Barbara; look at it."

She looked long at the medal, with its shining disk glinting in the sunlight, carefully reading the inscription upon it, and seemingly unaware that Beverly was watching the play of the sunshine as it filtered through the leaves and hid in the meshes of her hair.

"'T was bravely won, Beverly," she said at last. "We all rejoiced."

"I knew you would," he replied. "You helped me to win, and you must rejoice with me."

"I? How did I help you win?" she asked.

"Why, Barbara, by your good letters, your prayers for me, your friendship, and all your true qualities. By these I was helped, and I resolved to bring the prize and lay it on your lap, and say, 'You helped me win this; we share it together.' Let us go and show it to father."

They walked down across the road, and entered the smithy, where Luke Ronan was talking with two of the men who had not left after greeting Beverly. The father's eye kindled with pride as he looked at the medal, and he handed it to the other men with a smile on his sweaty face. The little plush case had gone the round, and Barbara was again holding it in her hand, when a vehicle stopped at the door. She glanced out, and for a moment her face clouded as she recognized the occupant of the buggy. It was Dr. Deynell, a fast-driving visitor from the East, who spent his early life in Delhurst, but had won riches in the great cities. His high-spirited horse usually pulled the conveyance by lines taut as steel, and a lather of foam yeasted under the well-fitting harness. There was something forbidding about the physician's smug face, yet it was almost classic in outline; while his sleek manners and purring tones were vastly impressive to the casual observer.

He had stopped to get a bolt to replace a broken one in the axle of his carriage. One had to be made, and Luke soon cut and heated the iron, while the doctor waited, and looked admiringly at the girl.

While the blacksmith shaped the bolt he saw a black ant creeping up the block with a tiny white seed in its clutch. It ran across the anvil toward the spot where the heavy hammer was falling. For a moment the creature was under the stroke of doom. Luke's brows relaxed as he saw it. The hammer hung, poised in midair, and the grimy hand of the blacksmith brushed the ant gently aside, the kindly mood glorifying his homely face as he waited till it was out of danger. The doctor and Beverly had both seen this little by-play, and the latter said, "Few would stop a hurried job to save so small a life."

"True," replied his father; "yet his heart must be hard who would willingly kill the helpless thing."

"What would be the difference?" asked Deynell.

"Only this," answered the smith, resting on his hammer handle, while beads of perspiration gemmed his brow, "a man is sometimes allowed to hold in his hand the fate of weaker things, as Jehovah holds ours. My hammer, like fate, hung above that ant. As I need mercy, I will be merciful. I find considerable pleasure in that kind of thing, and never lose a chance to practice it, I assure you."

"Well," said the doctor, "that sounds Churchly, quite sermonic; but it won't work in practical, every-day affairs. It is mere sentiment—moonshine and mush. I see your son comes honestly by his predilection for the pulpit. However, you are a sort of prophet yourself, wearing a leathern

apron instead of a goatskin mantle, and eating hog and hominy in place of locusts and wild honey. Preaching, to your tribe, comes as easy as yodeling to a bobolink; and what's bred in the bone is sure to come out in the flesh. I would not pause for such a purpose," he continued, with a subdued swagger; "I would strike swift and sure. I'd spare no creature that hindered my work. I believe in crushing everything that crosses my plans. Such a spirit wins in this world."

"Neither in this world nor another can it win, sir," replied Luke, "and the man who is not merciful shall cry for it in vain. 'The measure you mete shall be measured to you.' That's from the Bible, and maybe new to you. It is a deep law of life, all the same."

"Pshaw! Parson's talk!" exclaimed Deynell. "I seek no mercy, ask no favors, care for no friends. I drive straight on, and I'll compass my end and clear my path, come what may. Such palaver may do for a crossroads hamlet, but not for city life. For men of affairs, it is nonsense. I am a man grown, and have put away such infantile prate. Look out for Number One; feather your own nest; keep out of the ruck, and let Old Sooty take the hindmost."

The bolt was finished, and as the doctor turned to follow the smith out of the shop, he looked jealously toward Beverly, who was talking in a suppressed tone to Barbara. A light smile was playing over his upturned face, and brightening all the grimy room. With a scowl,

Deynell stepped out into the sunshine, and in a few minutes he was whirled away in the cloud of dust that always attended his journeys about the village, which he revisited once a year, much to the wonder of the natives, who never ceased to discuss his good luck.

The next evening, Beverly took tea at Barbara's home, and the long summer evening was spent in making plans for their future. They were now betrothed, and eager to assume life's responsibilities. Out under the stars they sat, and Ronan pictured their little parsonage as it was to be, with books and flowers and domestic joys—the home where all the sanctities of the fireside would surround them, and where many would find a place of help and comfort. Sometimes she read to him from a book called "The Diary of a Minister's Wife," and he, listening, cast a horoscope of happy auguries.

They saw each other every day for a fortnight, and no summer day was long enough for them. What, with stories of his sad incarceration and his college honors and glimpses into their wedded state, not far distant, the time sped all too swiftly. Every day stepped on a turf enameled with flowers, which sprinkled their dew on its feet as it sped along.

On the last evening before Beverly's departure for Conference they were walking along the meandering road not far from Barbara's home. The highway was deserted, and white in the moonlight. The long, black shadows of the two fig-

ures fell behind them, and all the world stretched brightly before. Beverly pressed the little hand on his arm, and held it a prisoner in his strong fingers, as he asked, "Do you ever wonder who hated me enough to bribe poor Mooney to plot my ruin?"

"Yes," she replied, "I think it was Dr. Deynell. Since I nursed mother at his hospital, three years ago, he has vexed me with his attentions. He has even gone so far as to write to me, and in one of his letters he said I would never be your bride. Of course, I have never answered his letters, or paid any attention to them. He is odious to me. And, after all, there is but one man for me in the whole world."

"Well," returned Beverly, "I think his knavery will recoil on his own head. At any rate, you are mine, darling; and soon we will be wedded, and can laugh at his discomfiture."

"But he is a proud man, Beverly," and the brown eyes became troubled for a moment. "When scorned, his so-called love will turn to hatred. He is vindictive as well. Who knows what sinful machinations may enter his envious mind. His success has fired his passions."

"Perhaps so; but they will consume him, until he is humbled. His ability has made him drunk with egotism. He needs to be brought low, and if he can endure sorrow when it overtakes him, he may yet be a useful man. He must be remarkable in organizing ability. Five years ago he left this town with nothing but a college sheepskin and a consuming desire for lucre. Now he is head



of a company ramified over several States, and with branches in six cities."

"Yes; it is astonishing to the people here," said Barbara.

"So it is. The old-timers call it fortune, and say that circumstances have favored him. They used to despise his boastful prophecies of his future, and dubbed him 'Windy Deynell.' Well, he knows how to raise the wind, financially as well as orally. I really doubt, however, if he can permanently push on. This world is built decently, and its laws are against rascality. When a man tries to manage a crooked business, he usually gets it too crooked, like the hunter who bent his gun in order to shoot around a haystack—the bullet went clear around, and hit him in the back."

"Let's not talk about him any more," said Barbara. "His path has diverged from ours forever. May they never cross again!"

After a little silence, Ronan spoke again:

"How much I owe you for all my success! Do you remember that winter night when you came to the rear of the churchroom, close by the door, and asked me to go to the altar? What a change came into my life from that hour!"

"Yes," she replied, "and I have my reward for my faith and prayers. You are all mine now."

"Did you foresee it at the time?" he asked.

"O no; I was only seeking your soul's welfare. I thought I might influence you, as I had done others, to begin a nobler life."

"All that I love to think of in the past or

dream of in the future gathers about you," he said, looking down lovingly at her as they stopped at a little gate in front of the Lawson cottage.

"To-morrow," he continued, lifting her smiling face up toward his, until the moonlight fell full upon it, "to-morrow I go to Conference to get my appointment—our appointment. Only a little while to wait, dearest."

For a moment she was clasped closely in his arms, and then she hastened up the path to the house; but not before she had heard his "Good-night, bonnie sweetheart, good-night!"

## CHAPTER VII

### Beverly at the Conference

AS an applicant for admission on trial, and a student of this Occidental School of the prophets, young Ronan soon discovered that the annual assembly of the people called Methodists was a picturesque and pathetic convocation. The foregathering of the fire-carriers, the homeless heralds of the Cross, who had overrun a continent with the gospel message, thrilled him. Six such interesting days he had seldom known as those spent among the seasoned, spiritual warriors, who had left plow and ax, cobbler's bench and broad-horn's oar, to better mankind; whose high praise was that "the common people heard them gladly."

Old and youthful, wise and simple, ambitious and humble, had come up for the yearly reunion; some glowing with success, some humiliated by failure—but all fraternal, unselfish, and hopeful, despite their scanty allowances and strenuous labors. There was a strong comradeship in their ranks, and genuine fellowship knitted all the members of the itinerant clan together. Bound in a simple but compact unity, they were willing to go anywhere or suffer anything for the good of the cause.

As Elder Kerr expressed it, "a Methodist preacher can stand anything one year, and anything else the next."

With but small salaries, and smaller libraries, they well knew the deep joy of self-sacrifice, and they loved to make the woods ring at their camp-meetings, held in river bush or prairie grove, with the pilgrim lyric:

"No foot of land do I possess,  
No cottage in the wilderness."

Never waiting for a society made ready for their ministry, the circuit-rider follows the lone wagon of the emigrant, and binds the frontier homes with cords of love to the living Church. No mining camp is too remote, no ranch too lonely, no slum too malodorous for him. He is a fore-runner of the King, feeling that heaven smiles on his mission; and, whether speeding like a racer, with loins girt, or leaning on his patriarchial staff, he fares ever forward, looking for a city not built with hands.

How exuberant the tender greeting at the seat of Conference, when one pastor meets another who is serving in the charge where he was stationed several years before! All the saints must be asked about. What hearty handshaking and scanning of faces and looking into each other's eyes. Few are the bonds so silk-soft and steel-strong as those that bind together this corps of aggressive, dauntless pathfinders of the Master. One by one the fathers come down to the sunset shore of life, and signal the outbound ship; but

## Beverly at the Conference 103

the younger men take up their Bibles and saddle-bags and go on.

The session invariably opens with the heart-moving song of the dispersed:

"And are we yet alive,  
And see each other's face?"

It recalls those who are not present, who met with them in years past—veterans buried where they fell, and children sleeping in many a churchyard, waiting in graves loaned by sympathetic members, until the great home-gathering on the last day, when the earth and the sea shall give up their dead.

After the first hymn, the Bishop leads in a prayer, that grips the altar and lifts the synod to the mountain top. The sacrament is taken in silence. The business begins with the question after each name as the roll is called, "Is there anything against him?"

Once in twelve months each man's richest asset, his character, is closely scrutinized; and, if all is well, the inspection is finished with the answer, "Nothing against him."

When the collections for missions and benevolences are reported, the presiding elders often have young preachers come to them with the request, "Can you lend me ten dollars for six months?"

And the elder asks, "What do you want it for?"

"My missionary collection is not large; I want to increase it."

"Why did n't you collect it on your circuit?"

"I gathered all I could. My people are poor. It is hard sledding for all of them."

"Is your salary all paid?"

"No; but it is promised, before snow flies, if I return to the work."

"Have you no money?"

"No; I put in what I had saved for a new suit of clothes."

"How will you get books for your next year's studies?"

"The Book Concern will trust me; I am square on its ledger."

"How will you get home?"

"I have a return ticket. I made sure of that."

"Well, you are the fourth man who has asked me for a loan to-day. My wallet is almost empty. Here is the money."

The young man adds it to his hoard, and when he hears his name, answers proudly, "Forty dollars from Beanblossom for missions, and one hundred and twenty-seven converts enrolled." The clerk writes it down, but no notice is taken by others.

When Dr. Hiroof calls, "Sixteen hundred dollars for missions," a ripple of wonder breaks across the room, and some murmur, "That's remarkably fine;" but wise folks know that one of Hiroof's rich members gave him one thousand dollars, and that the balance came easily, on a simple pulpit announcement of the need, for his flock had fat pastures, and waded brisket-deep in lush clover all the year.

A wrinkled hero, who has filled every appointment on Tailholt Circuit during the past year, some

## Beverly at the Conference 105

of them in the saddle, some on snowshoes, often breaking the ice on the wash-basin in the spare room with his boot heel, and has added a new class at Barren schoolhouse, stands up in faded jeans, and in a husky tone asks to be superannuated.

Brother Coleman, the only classical graduate in the "Sanhedrin of the Saddle-bags," says it reminds him of Marius in the Forum, unlacing the breast of his tunic to show the younger men his battle-scars, so proudly yet modestly is it accomplished.

"My work is done, Bishop," he says. "I can carry the load no longer. I want to be laid on the shelf permanently [this word chokes him]. My health is shattered, and my voice is all gone, but I make no complaint. I have had forty-seven years of the pastorate, among good people. God bless 'em! Let me step down. I am nearing home, and over the remainder of the road I'll make a quick run. If I reach there before you, I will be at the gate to meet you with a welcome hand."

His eyes, that time could not film, grow wet, handkerchiefs hide the faces of those about him, and down the Bishop's cheeks tears roll copiously. One of the elders, with a melody like the silver trumpets of the Levites, uplifts the hymn,—

"Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love."

And a tidal wave of rich emotion sweeps over all, washing away the dust of the march.

The connectional secretaries pitch the tune

for the whole coming year in warm speeches, sagging with statistics, and glowing, like opals, with mingled milk and fire.

There is humor, too. One backwoods Boanerges relates how he halted, faint with hunger, at a cabin in a clearing, and requested something to stay his stomach. While eating the appetizing pork and beans, he saw three slab-sided curs scuffling over the remnants in the back yard. He said, "Are these dogs yours, ma'am?"

"No," said the housewife, beaming; "they hain't mine; but I think all the hungry critters in the county come here for a meal."

"Such," quoth he, "is the hospitable code of ethics down our way."

The wit of these mounted men was, on occasion, biting as vitriol. Two lawyers riding along, overtook one named Jesse Lee, and thought to have fun at his expense. Getting either side of the preacher in the road, one said, "Parson, is your education wide and deep?"

"Well," answered the gospeller, in the language of Shakespeare, "it is not so wide as a church-door, nor deep as a well; but it will serve."

"Do you speak correct English?" asked the other lawyer.

"I try to," replied the dominie; "but I do not stop to correct little errors which do not change the sense of what I say. For instance: I was preaching at old Zion Church last Sunday, and meant to say, 'The devil is a liar;' and I said, 'The devil is a lawyer.' I did n't rectify it, as it is practically the same thing."



When this percolated through the craniums of the attorneys, one said to the other, "This fellow is either a knave or a fool."

The reverend looked out the heel of his eye, and said, quietly, "No; but I'm between the two;" and at the crossroads they left him to his solitary journey.

Beverly smiled at the recital of a brother who was sent to a place called Ellbridge. Nearing it, he met an Englishman, and asked him how far it was to Ellbridge.

"Hellbridge," said the cockney, "is six miles from 'ere. Ye can see the smoke from the next 'ill."

"I found," said the sorrowful parson, "that the Britisher had the name right, but the bridge was gone."

A mossback fears that the women are getting too much power, and says, "They will be preaching, first thing you know."

"Let 'em preach!" shouts a stalwart elder. "If a woman can preach as well as I can, she has as good right as I have; if she can preach better, she has a better right; if she can preach worse than I can, may the good Lord deliver us from hearing her!"

It is told that Charles Wesley threatened to leave a Conference, where John was presiding, if a certain wordmonger was not rapped down from his rainbow flights. Turning to one near by, the imperturbable John said, "Hand Charles his hat." Every bishop remembers this, and deals gently with the loquacious gentry.

Ronan, sitting in the gallery, felt that a voluble brother was wasting time in endless talk. A door is open on the opposite side of the room, and the Bishop says, calmly: "Close it, please. I can't stand wind blowing on me from both sides at once."

Ronan wonders how the portly Bishop, with his classic face and silver hair, won his great fame. He seems slow, but his eyes note every movement. He is an overseer, but not an overlooker.

One of the presiding elders has held his office for twelve years, and a determined minority is resolved to send him to the pastorate. The man is an autocrat, and has ruled the Conference by great native talent, aided by a simple expedient. When the class of probationers comes into the Conference, he listens to the examiner's reports, and writes each notable one in his little brown book. Then he scans the features as the selected men come forward, and, putting the record and face together, casts the candidate's horoscope. At some time during the week he seeks the promising neophyte, and, in his mellow, fraternal way, encourages him, gives a word of advice, and bids him count the elder as his friend. It is all fair and sincere, and wins the friendless clerical stripling to his side as long as he remains in the Conference.

Now the battle is drawn, and the old warhorse knows that his clan will gird him at his bugle-call. The Conference desires the Bishop to bear the brunt of reducing Saul to the ranks. The Bishop refuses, and throws it back on the Conference. It requests him again, by vote, to let no man

hold the office more than four years. The aged chairman sees that the great body is shirking, and forcing him into the breach. A change comes over him. He rises, towering above the others like a redwood in a thicket.

"Brethren!" he cries in his sonorous voice, full-swelling, like a harmony of horns, "You shall not make me do this thing. If it is done, you must do it." And for ten minutes he pours out billowy sentences of Ciceronian expostulation and exhortation, flowing limpid to the last word, and takes his seat in a hush so intense the clock is heard upon the wall. They are conquered, and meekly take up their duty, unceremoniously dropping the unchallenged official into a college agency, which he prefers to a regular pulpit.

On the last day of the assembly, Beverly received a note, calling him to the house where the Bishop and Cabinet held forth.

As the fatherly sage looked at the theologian closely, he was thinking—there is no mud at the bottom of his eyes—and he asked, "Your name is Beverly Ronan?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have here a letter, asking that you be sent to a Church in a far Eastern city," said the Bishop. "Are you willing to go?"

"Anywhere, sir," returned Beverly.

"Well, I can not transfer you, as you are not a member here; but I can leave you without work, and commend you to them."

"Yes, sir; I will thank you to do so, if it seems best."

"Their Conference is in session now at E—. You might step down to the telegraph-office and wire Bishop M—, asking if I shall send you there."

"I would rather not do this, sir."

"Why not?" asked the Bishop, in surprise.

"Because," replied Beverly, "I feel that I am a man under orders. I go and come under authority; I am led. I prefer to have no part whatever in my appointment. I stand ready for anything, like the ox, between the plow and the altar. I am anxious to be a man sent, and to have no part in selecting my work."

"Very well," said the Bishop, "some one else will attend to it, and we will inform you later as to what you are to do."

Beverly thanked the Bishop, and retired, well pleased and full of expectation. He had no sooner left the room than one of the elders, who had been present during the interview, and who had his case in charge, offered to send the dispatch, saying, "I like that fellow's honest face, and his spirit of obedience."

That night Beverly witnessed a sight without precedent or parallel in our land. Two hundred men, with all their families and belongings, were held in the hollow of the Bishop's hand, renouncing all control over their habitations, and moving at his will. When he rose to read the fateful list, a hush, solemn and profound, fell on the house. Ronan, like every one else, listened intently, but his name was not there.

## Beverly at the Conference 111

As he rose to pass out with the throng, a hand was laid on his arm, and he was told that the Bishop wished to speak with him. When he reached that individual, he felt his hand clasped warmly for a moment, as the Bishop said: "You are wanted in Millbank. Take this letter, and go at once."

## CHAPTER VIII

### In Birkey's Store

AT Birkey's store, in Millbank, the usual Saturday night crowd had gathered, to purchase Sunday's supplies, to loaf, gossip, and chaff each other; to shake out the budgets of Dame Rumor and Mrs. Grundy, and, with ungartered faculties, enjoy this natural social club. They sat on soap boxes, cracker barrels, or reclined on burlaps and counters, amid a smell of cheese and codfish and the odor of sage and dried herring.

Some kept well-filled brier pipes reeking, while others meditatively chewed "long green," and listened to the discussions of village prattle. Most of them were mill hands, with lathy figures and tallow faces—spinners, carders, dyers, bleachers, spoolers, and shuttle-shooters—with the greasy garb and crushed mien that denotes a hopeless outlook on life.

Among the number were a few lean-flanked farmers, who bore the brunt of the boisterous conversation, nothing loath. The best rough-and-tumble wrestler in the settlement, bandy-legged, sawed-off Ad Whitely had the floor, and was discoursing on penurious people, "skinflints and flea shuckers" he called them in the spicy argot of the forks of Otter Creek.

"Old Sinner McLaw," he blustered, "is the orneriest man under the canopy. He's meaner en a mud turtle. You hear me orate? He's smaller en the hind end of nothin' whittled some. Yes, sirree; he's nerrer en that. Ef I only knowed how to signify it or bring it to yer minds. I'm givin' it right from the shoulder now; on'y I can't tell half of it. Ef he could steal the coppers from a dead man's eyes, he'd feel et they wuz worth forty dollars apiece. He makes me sizz. I'd like to yank him one. I'll leave it to Lew. Hain't that so, Lew? Ef it ain't, I do n't want a cent."

At this the long-coupled storekeeper, who could cover more ground in a hop, step, and jump than any man on the hill, bit into a prune, and said:

"I'll tell you what the dod-burned old critter did for me some years ago. His wive wuz sick, and Laura wuz away, and the doctor jest said he was starvin' the old woman to death, and told him to go to the store and git some extra eatin' for her. He kem in here and bought a quarter's worth of sody crackers, grumblin' about extravagance 'tell you'd a thought he wuz the 'probable son,' as the nigger said. When he got home, he found her sittin' up, some better, and he hides the crackers in the woodshed and next day brings 'em back here and asks me for his quarter. An' I give it to him jest to see what human nature would do when it lets go all holts. An' the old pelter jest naturally stood right there on his two hind legs and took it, by gosh! It tee-tow-shally flabbergasted me, and me an' myself just went out fer a

spell to git cooled off. He's a doggoned ole mummy dug up from Egypt er some other seaport, an' walkin' around to save funeral expenses. He's a thumper, there ain't no use a-talkin'."

"That's the straight of it, men," said Whitely. "What d'ye think of that?"

"That hain't all by a long shot," said the grocer, spitting at a knothole in the floor, and looking up at the rosette of fly-paper tacked on the ceiling. "One winter he hed about two hundred head o' steers, an' his salt, which he buys by the carload, give out. The road wuz broke up with the spring thaw, and he could n't haul anything from the station near his farm. I sell salt fer a livin', along with several other things, an' one day he walks in an' sez, sez he, 'Lew, kin ye loan me a barrel of salt till I kin git a team to the little sidin' near my place?' I sez, 'Yes;' an' hang me, if he did n't take it, an' when he got his carload, he brought a barrel back and rolled it into my shed. How's that fer close, I want to inquire?"

Bud Busby, the best coon hunter on the pike, who said paradise was full of persimmon-trees, with a possum in each one, pulled up his topboots, in which his trousers were inserted, till the gilt stars on the red tops gleamed brightly, and said: "When the last preacher fust come here, old Sinner handed him a present done up in a paper, and told him to open it when he got home from church. His wife watched him shuck it, and it had more peelin's onto it than an onion; an' what d'ye think he found when he got to the nub o' the thing? Well, gen-tle-men, I'm a buckskin hoss ef it



war n't only a apple, by gosh, a measly rusticoat apple."

The listeners glared steadily at the last speaker for a moment, to show their appreciation of his fling; and then Hen Budgell chimed in. He was the musical genius of the place, and, as "Ad" Whitely said, "could squirt 'he 'Jenny Linn Polker' outen a mouth organ better 'n any feller from the Re : Horse Tavern to t'other side o' the cocoonery."

"The lop-eared Dutchman who worked fer him one year told me that, when the old man used the bellows of a winter mornin' to blow up the fire on the hearth, an' got the blaze started, he always put a stopper in the nose of the bellows to save the wind for the next time. Do you know, when he drops a coin into his weasel-skin purse you kin hear the bird on it scretch, 'Farewell, vain world; I'm gone forever!' Dad sez ye kin."

"Let me get a word in," said Schoolmaster Nixon, who was as thin as a hoe handle, and could scarcely cast a shadow on a side hill. "Mc-Law is a curmudgeon, and no mistake; but he is not all bad. Give Old Nick what's coming to him. He has his good side, too. You mentioned Laura; but not many of you can remember when she came to his house. Sinner obeys her as the tin rooster on the lightning-rod of his barn obeys the west wind. But she is not his own child. He adopted her out of an institution, and I saw it done. One summer day, many years ago, the boss of the orphan asylum down in the city got

about two dozen wagons and omnibusses, and drove out here to give them a breath of fresh air and a sight of green grass. You know McLaw's forty-acre meadow, with the grove of shellbarks in it. Well, the manager asked the old fellow for the privilege of driving in and letting the children have a picnic. As it would cost nothing, McLaw said, 'Yes;' and in they went. I was a boy myself then; and when the procession passed through the village, we quit playing town ball, and tagged after them to the field. The old man went out to see them also.

"As the teams turned through the gate into the field, the children shouted their glee; and when the vehicles stopped and the keepers lifted them into the deep grass, they ran for the wild flowers like mad. I was near McLaw as a wee sick girl was lifted out, so frail, and pinched with sad eyes. When set down, she waded into the clover waist deep, took one look at the hills and the sky, gave a pitiful cry, and fell prone on the earth. The manager picked her up, and said: 'June is too strong for her little soul. She is drunk with the summer.' Old Sinner was staring at her, and finally he asked, 'What's her name?'

" 'Laura,' answered the man.

" 'Where's her folks?'

" 'She has neither father or mother, nor any kinfolk.'

" McLaw was trying to hold himself back, but was borne on despite his efforts. Out of some deep place he said, 'What will you do with her?'

"Take her back to the Home in my buggy."

"Sa-ay!" said Sinner, speaking slowly and solemnly, "d'ye see that house up there on the hill? That's mine, an' not a soul in it but wife an' me. I own this place, an' if you 'll give her to me, I 'll be good to her. I 'll take her for my own daughter. I 'll adopt her at once."

"Take her, Mr. McLaw, and you can sign the adoption papers to-morrow;" an' he laid the child in old Sinner's arms. You never saw a prouder man than he. He walked toward home stepping high, like a blind horse in tall grass, trying to whistle a stave of 'Bonnie Doon.' He's a Scotchman, you know."

"That's a fact," said Drover Biggs. "I was there, an' saw the whole thing. An' it went smack through me, like a buckshot through a box o' axle grease; an' my ole woman wuz so glad she shed tears enough to fill a sap-trough."

"Yes," resumed the teacher, "he carried her tenderly to his home, and for weeks watched over her sick-bed. His wife was delighted with the little one, and declared that before she came the house had been a body without a soul in it."

The group was deeply interested when Biggs took up the tale. "'Bout three weeks after that," he said, "I had a horse-trade with Sinner, an' I went up to his place. The hired man, on his way to the pasture, met me and said that the child was like to die, and that the doctor had no hope at all; so I concluded not to bother him that day, but went into the barn to look over the stock. I was standin' in a stall at the fa d,

kind o' in the dark, when in comes McLaw, with the sick child on a pillow in his arms. He lays her down gentle like in a manger on the hay, not knowin' any one was near, and kneels in the stall on the straw, and begins to pray. I could hear every word he said, an' it was somethin' like this: 'O Lord, here 's a pore little young 'un. She hain't got no mother or father or no anybody to care for her, an' I brung her to you. Once you laid in a manger jest like her, Lord, helpless an' weak. We can't do nothin', Lord. Seein' we can't, an' you kin, I 'm askin' you to spare her, Lord. I 'm makin' bold to ask you.'

"I saw Sinner's wife comin' out to hunt him, an' I slipped into the cornfield an' went home. Sence then I always say every man's got two sides to him."

"Some has three or four," said Ad Whitely, drying a drop on his cheek. And then, as Birkey turned to wrap a mackerel for a customer, the best talker of the small synod gave in his contribution to the symposium.

"Every human has somewhere in him a hint of the Divine, and some things about that codger," observed Lafe Newton, a local preacher, known among his neighbors as "the wet log," which term, among the country people, describes a person so prosaic and phlegmatic that nothing can kindle his emotions or inflame his imagination, and who, in consequence, has made a total failure of the ministry and returned to laic life, "seems to indicate that he is a singed cat, as the proverb goes, and not altogether a bad sort. I some-

times wonder if the old skeesicks is n't playing 'possum and fooling us all. Of course, he is a miserly curmudgeon and well entitled to the cognomen 'Sinner;' but I have thought he likes that appellation entirely too well. He rolls it like a sweet morsel under his tongue, and never loses a chance to use it himself. Many folks like to appear better than they are, and a few strive to appear worse. They are called, in the schools, 'psychological freaks,' drawled the "Wet Log;" and my professor at the university used to say they would well repay study. I suspect McLaw belongs in that category. His continual manifestation of a petrified moral nature is entirely too obvious to be sincere, I think," he concluded, dogmatically, quite in the clerical manner, as though asking who could withstand his logic. "If Uncle Ezra's heart was wholly undraped, we would find he wears a double vesture, with sackcloth for outward service."

"Hev you any reasons more 'n your own suspicions?" queried Birkey, who was sprinkling sand over the floor.

"Yes," replied Lafe, "I have some facts of my own observation and a few given me by one who knew him intimately. Firstly," he went on, with the exegetical habit strong upon him, holding his index finger erect, "many years ago, when he concluded to adopt the orphan child who had caught his fancy at the waifs' picnic, he asked me to go to the asylum with him in his wagon and aid him in securing the little one. You all know there is a lovely garden in front of the Charity Home.

laid out in flower beds, with bordered walks; and we, being too early by half an hour, had to wait for admission. I strolled through the well-kept place, admiring the rare plants and gorgeous blooms. After awhile I missed 'Sinner,' and went to search for him, and, strange to relate, discovered him in an angle of the great building near the wall, kneeling by a flower, and watering it with tears. As I came quietly up to the spot, I saw him kiss the blossom again and again. He thought he was hidden from sight by the tall edifice; but I stepped close, and said, 'Mr. McLaw, what is that which has moved you so mightily?'

"He looked up, as if ashamed, wiped his eyes, and said, in a low voice:

"'It is a Scotch daisy, a wee crimson-tipped thing from the moors of my own native land. It minded me of my innocent youth. Again I saw the laverock in the lift mounting heavenward in circles of song. Once more I heard the cascade in the highland glen, and the call of its sparkling waters unmanned me. I am ashamed of my tears.'

"'You need not apologize for them,' I said; 'but I am surprised. I thought you carried a cinder where your heart should be. You have often declared it.'

"'Well,' he acknowledged, 'I like life best on such terms. The thistle is our national emblem, ye ken,' he said, broadly, dropping into the dialect of the far-off shore. 'Outwardly naethin' is thornier, inwardly naethin' is silkier; but I maun show the stinging prickles. It's my ain dour stubborn kith glowering through my een.'

"Then," went on the observing Newton, "we went in to draw up the papers to secure the homeless one for his fireside, and I helped to carry little Laura to his house. But all the way, as we rode, I thought of a story I read about Christ, which is not in the Bible. Only a small part of his life is there given, and even that only in outline. Many of the traditional stories are manifestly false, and others doubtful; but a few flow into such accord with what we know of the Son of man that they may well be true.

"One is about a group of villagers who stood on a street corner in Nazareth, gazing at a dead dog lying in the highway—one of the despised, half-starved curs which are the scavengers of Oriental towns. They pelted the carcass with jeers, and commented in words more unwholesome than the object they looked upon. 'See his scalled hide,' cried one; 'and his lean ribs,' said another; 'and his staring eyes,' echoed a third. A boy standing near heard the bitter speech, and spake quietly, 'Pearls are not whiter than his teeth.' It was even so; in the dead beast's mouth jewels gleamed lustrous and fair. 'Who is the lad?' questioned an Essene in flowing gabardine, 'Who is he who sees loveliness in such a vile thing?' And one replied, 'He is the son of the carpenter, Joseph, the staff on which his widowed mother leans.'

"I there learned," said the "Wet Log," retrospectively, "that even in the despised and obdurate 'Sinner' McLaw there was at least one good trait, and I have looked for more, but in vain. He steadfastly acts like a hedghog, and palpably courts the

contempt of his townsmen, and he gets it, gospel measure, heaped up and running over. Still I believe it is only a vicious front, and I'll tell you why, basing my judgment on what his hired man told me some years ago. We are all well aware no beggar never got anything from him, unless it came through Laura; and most of you recall the winter of the panic in 1858. All the mills closed up, and many of the weaker operatives almost starved during the freezing weather. They lived on cornmeal and little else for weeks. Women and children would have died but for the farmers—Heaven, bless them!—who doled out grain to the perishing people without money and without price. The county helped a few who would accept pauper aid; but most of them spurned it and went about half-fed, using what little strength they had to damn the flinty-hearted who passed them by. And McLaw was the flintiest. Not one peck of corn, not one gallon of milk did he give, though he had plenty of both. To all appeals he turned a deaf ear, and drove away empty-handed all who came to his door. Black the ban put on the old Sioux! And many the wish that he might soon go out of his gloomy house feet foremost.

"At that time," Newton continued, "Fritz, the Bible-backed Bavarian, was his employee; and he alleged to me that there were about a dozen hams and as many shoulders, with some smoked jowls and shanks, hanging in the smoke-house near the well, and night after night they disappeared. The Dutchman desired to save them by convey-



ing them into the cellar; but 'Sinner' said he was laboring under an optical illusion, and that no thieves had visited his premises. So it went on until nearly all were gone, when the Dutchman resolved to let the fierce dog loose (the same Prince which afterward went mad), and he declares that every morning he found the beast chained up instead of having the run of the yard. This puzzled him, as no stranger could approach the brute, and 'Sinner' asserted that he probably padlocked himself to the post when tired of keeping watch. So the Prussian resolved to sit up and see what this meant. He hid in the haymow of the barn, and about ten o'clock he saw McLaw coming out of his cellar with a lot of dripping side meat and fat bacon from a barrel, which he put in the smoke-house, chuckling to himself at a great rate. He then tied the dog at his kennel, and said, as he patted his head, 'Prince, you are vexing that round-shouldered Hessian with your nightly antics. Go in there and fall asleep.'

"The peeper then went to his bed, and in the morning the good meat was all carried off, and was frizzling in the frying-pans in the houses on the Lower Bank. He remarked to McLaw that the hams were disappearing very fast, and he replied: 'Of course they are. We eat a great deal of meat this cold weather. I have the appetite of a shark, and you devour as much as four men; but when it gives out I'll buy more. We won't starve,' he said, 'never fear.'

"The man told me this tale," concluded Newton, "and then, in his naïve way, said, 'Wat you

tink of dat mans, Mister Log?' and I replied: 'I surmise the misanthropical old hypocrite is trying to keep his left hand from knowing what his right hand does. Wouldn't it be funny if the crusty old grump, after all the gaffing we have given him, is all wool and a yard wide, and the trimmings thrown in?'

"Would n't it knock us silly," said Ad. "Enny way that last yarn 's purtier en a Johnny jump-up a-peekin' through the back door. I kalkilate it 's about time I meandered fer home."

And the convention adjourned until the next Saturday night.

## CHAPTER IX

### The First Sermon

“‘**A** MODERN Apollos,’ whatever that means,” mused old “Brad” Baldwin, the loom boss in Harley’s mill, an illiterate but important member of Millbank Church. As he wiped his oily hands on a piece of waste, he continued to himself: “I more ’n suspicion we’re in for a long spell o’ dry gospel in these diggin’s. If them ’ere critical fellers who faulted the last dominie for plowing close to the corn, do n’t git a dos’t now, I’m no profit or son of a profit. They must drink what’s poured out to ’em, too. I won’t belong to a Church unless it’s a religious Church.

“Hello, Hi,” he shouted, suddenly turning around, “come here and help me git this here note from Elder Hudson translated. It’s cum from Conference, consarnin’ our new preacher. Who was ancient Apollos anyhow? Was n’t he that silver-tongue Bible orator who helped Paul an’ who could talk the heathen into the Church in hundreds? It reads that the Bishop did n’t like the way we gaffed Brother Holt; but he wants to please us, if possible, and by way of squarin’ accounts send us a ‘modern Apollos,’ thinkin’ maybe the Lord kin use him to reach the sinners of Millbank.”

"Hi" Stites was an overgrown, lanky weaver, whose freckles seemed to run together and hide in his facial wrinkles when he laughed, lest his wide smile should overflow them; but his voice was as sweet as "Bob White's" flute blown across upland stubble when he led the singing in the Church choir. He came over to where the boss stood perusing the elder's letter, and said:

"He's probably one o' these rippling-wavelet, purple-sunset pulpiteers. Of course, the Lord can use him. He used the foal of an ass once on the Olivet road, and I can't cipher out any sort of creature he can't use."

"But what in the name of horse sense is a 'modern Apollos?'" Baldwin asked.

"It means," returned Hi, "that he ain't a wet log."

"An' what is a wet log, Hiram?"

"That's a nickname given to a parson who is heavy and hard to move. It's a backwoods saying from the brush clearings and neighborhood frolics when the folks used to help each other at log-rolling, to make room for crops."

"Well, he will be here Saturday—that's tomorrow," said the boss, glancing again at the letter in his hand. "We'll have to git a room red-ded up for him, I reckon. I hope he's got old-fashioned, deep-down piety; but I'll stand by him if he can't preach more'n a peewee. Fluency do n't make a saint by a whole lot. Some o' these fellers 'at kin mighty nigh talk a fish out o' the mill-race hain't got religion enough to wad a gun. Mebbe," continued Baldwin, as he folded

the letter and went to the loom, "mebbe he kin pry heaven open with prayer, er sing old Satan out of a sinner, as well as preach like Apollos. Anyway, I stand by him."

The next day the preacher arrived, and the group around Birkey's store forgot to spit for a full five minutes, while gaping at the active youth who put his hand into the boss's broad palm and said, "Are you Mr. Baldwin?"

"Yes, sir; that's my name. An' you're the parson, I reckon. Wife allowed you must come up to our house and stay till you kin do better." And the exhorter picked up the stranger's bag of books and satchel of clothing, and led the way up the street, under a battery of curious eyes, keeping close to the palings, to find footing amid the mud.

The boys, school-free, racing homeward, halted to stare and whisper, "That's the new minister," in rueful tones, regretting that fishing on Sundays must lag now, and meetings would begin, and the bass just right in the old dam, with new poles waiting in every woodshed.

The shoemaker, in his door, relieved himself by emitting a jet of nicotine that swamped a tumblebug in a hoof-print on the highway, and said to the crowd inside: "He's a husky chap. Looks as if he could hoe his own row."

As Beverly followed Baldwin up the little, narrow street, he could hear a derisive "Hallelujah! hallelujah!" floating from the roysterers in the grocery.

Mrs. Baldwin welcomed him with true hospi-

talities, and gave him the best room. The dinner-table was set on the airy porch, where Jennywrens hopped to the floor from the peach boughs, and, as they sat down to eat, the good wife made the usual apologies for lack of suitable provender, although the table was loaded with good things which she had prepared for his coming.

When Ronan praised the coffee, old Baldwin laughed and said: "Every housewife has her favorite dish. In cookin' it she becomes expert. I argue that a woman can only cook one thing perfectly. What a feast could be spread if my wife could make the coffee, and Aunt Melissa Irwin the pie, Mrs. Bentley the biscuit, Mother McKim the bread, and Sister Royer the jam!"

When the creamy Mocha had loosened Beverly's tongue, he blundered out the information that to-morrow's sermon would be his first regular one. He had exhorted in rural places and addressed Sunday-schools, leaving them little the worse. He had helped at a "brush camp" in the woods, and had failed utterly; but a full service all alone he had never compassed.

This news was spread, and caused the local elder, old Deacon Hubbell, to say, "I'll be there to-morrer to see that goslin' try his wings."

The next morning, after breakfast, Ronan walked into the garden and sat, half-dazed and wholly nervous, looking at a tiger-lily, with its bronze lips spider-spun, while deep within its bell a bumble-bee was ringing matins to the Sabbath morn. The calm of the day could not soothe his soul. He was trembling with that nameless dread

that fills a fine nature when beginning a lifework, that indescribable sensation of weakness and insufficiency.

A footstep startled the robin in the arbor beside him; and old Deacon Hubbell stumbled in, saying, as he sat down after his greeting, "Had a dream last night, young fellow, about you."

"Now," thought Beverly, "this good soul has come to comfort me. Heaven has sent him;" and so he said: "A dream? Tell me what it was."

"Well," said Hubbell, knocking a caterpillar off the bench and smiling unwholesomely: "I dreamed that you got up in the pulpit and made a try at preachin', but you got in the brush, lost tetotially, plum blind. You tried to man it through, but you could n't; and after ye had discoursed about as long as this 'ere cane," he held up his paw-paw walking-stick, "you went round and round in the thicket till you tangled your text all about you like a hoss in a picket-rope, and had to signal for help. Then I got up and finished the sermon best I could."

This, then, was brotherly comfort to cheer a beginner in his work. The old man grinned as he noticed the full effect of his tale, and, hearing the church bells clanging across the roofs, he said, "Come on; it is time for service."

"I'll be there soon," said Ronan; and when the elder had passed down the road, he entered his room. A few minutes later he appeared again and walked gravely to the church with the loom boss and his wife. When they came within sight of the little building, it was evident that most of

the villagers had resolved to hear the new minister that day.

The chapel was overfull, and under the horse sheds the wagons were crowded with people unable to get in. The few aristocratic members were in their pews, and the honest-hearted country folks crowded into every available seat. Many of the throng were merely curious, some came to worship, and a few pitied the bewildered beginner.

During the singing of the opening hymn old man McLaw and his daughter walked down the aisle to their pew. Ronan, in spite of his nervousness could not but notice Laura McLaw as she threaded her way through the crowd. She was certainly a luxuriant vision of female loveliness. Her oval face and olive skin, with a faint hint of color in her cheeks, her coronet of dark hair, large eyes of velvety black, and full red lips, went to make a striking face of a somewhat bold type of beauty—a woman who, in days of chivalry, would have gone through courts ringed with Cavaliers, as a planet moves amid its satellites. She wore a gown of ivory-colored mull, shot with gold—"a sort of sudsy stuff with yaller poker dots stirred in it," as one of the millhands afterwards described it.

Well she bore herself under the gaze of the many eyes turned on her as she walked to her seat, and greatly she enjoyed the sensation she made that day. The gaze of the crowd was respectful and courteous, however; for all knew of her power over her foster father and of the numberless charities helped and good deeds done with the money



he so freely gave to her. "A splendid woman," was the popular verdict, "possessed of an inward spirit to match her peerless beauty."

The few who were in sympathy with the young preacher put up unworded prayers for him as he bungled through the service and weltered, all helpless, in the depths of his text, which was the first three words of the Book, "In the Beginning." Leviathan could not dive to its depths, and this novice was whelmed therein and lost. Erect, pale, motionless, he stood; unable to edify, unable to stop, maundering on endlessly in obvious insipidities.

Presiding Elder Hudson, who had come out from the city to see the young condor try his Andean flight, sat abashed and mortified in a front pew, wishing to help, but only able to ejaculate: "Lord, give us patience! Lord, help!"

The class-leader had his face bowed in his hands. The curiosity seekers were snapping their watch-lids impatiently, and those standing near the door were slipping out.

Suddenly an amazing transformation occurred. The speaker halted, gazed about, and then drew himself to his full height, with rapt eyes looking far away. At the end of his own power he had cried inwardly for aid; and that day the Spirit put on Beverly Ronan's being as a garment. Something prophetic, vast, lifted him. It was the soul of the text. The awful soul, of which the words are the mere shell, seemed to take hold of him. A shudder shook his strong frame, and he held to the desk for support as one who clings to the bars

of the high altar. His gaze burned straight on, as if he saw the Invisible. His voice grew resolute and sincere and rich with orchestral harmonies, full of thrilling tones and haunting accents, with cadences mournfully melodious, as the meadow lark's yodel spilled on autumn fields. His features glowed the while like the face of Him who saw the Apocalypse. Up and on he flamed, higher, higher, in gyres of luminous eloquence, till Alec Blee, who had vexed Baldwin all morning by whispering, at each awkward turn, "Is that your modern Apollos?" heard the old disciple say, as he looked victoriously over the faces upturned in rapturous appreciation: "That's our modern Apollos! Praise the Lord!"

When Ronan had stopped and sat trembling in his chair, there was a silence as if heaven said, "Yea," audibly then. Many who rarely sang praise joined in the hymn that swept round the old galleries.

It is told that from that hour Deacon Hubbell was a changed man. All mellowed and chastened, he lived the life he preached. Professor Leland, who had come four miles to hear the new preacher, remained after the service to say, kindly, "Thank you, young man, my heart has been refreshed by your words."

When these and others had greeted and praised him, McLaw, the rich farmer, came forward, and said, "Can you go home with me to dinner?"

"I thank you, sir," Ronan replied; "but I think I must decline. I shall need rest for the evening service."

"Aye, so you will; but you can rest there, and I'll get you back before early candle-light."

"Well, I will go," Beverly answered.

The hours passed pleasantly, and it was late in the afternoon when Beverly rode toward the church. Laura accompanied him, in order to attend the evening service. Just outside of the town there was a corduroy bridge which spanned Otter Creek. The stream, usually a small one, was greatly swollen by the heavy rains of the last fortnight; in fact, on this particular afternoon it was a raging river, for the dam four miles above had burst under the pressure of the yellow torrent.

The horses balked at the bridge and shook their heads; but Laura urged them on, and they crept fearfully, under the lash, toward the other side. Beverly felt the structure sway, saw the girders leave the piers, and, with a crash, as the raging element tore the timbers asunder, the carriage went into the flood.

Beverly caught Laura's hand, and both leaped clear of the plunging hoofs, disappearing under the water. As they rose, the maddened horses struggled upon them and beat them again beneath the boiling torrent. Bruised and bleeding, they were swept toward the lower dam. Ronan, who was a superb swimmer, held Laura fast, bringing her to the surface; but a chill was at his heart, for she lay quiet in his arms, stunned or dead. He heard the roar of the falls at the mill just below, and, with his last reserve of energy, caught at a prostrate tree lying half submerged. Grimly clinging there, he dragged himself into an eddy, and found

bottom with his feet. Then lifting the girl, he reeled to the shore, where he sank on the sodden grass.

A farmer had seen it all, and his call brought the neighbors to the rescue. They found them bruised and weak, scarcely able to be moved, but finally they were taken to Laura's home.

It was soon discovered that she was not seriously hurt; but Ronan was so badly injured that he lay for many days in great suffering.

## CHAPTER X

### A Battle with Ghouls

**D**URING the night on which Philip Ellis and Edith had left the Colonel sitting on the broad porch, after telling him of their mutual love, unusual events occurred. As the two young people passed into the house, the veteran was very happy. "She is so much like her mother," he was thinking to himself, "the same sincerity and gentleness. Every year makes the likeness of form and face, of gesture and voice, more noticeable."

Thus he pondered, thinking of his beloved Agnes, whom he had wooed and won, thirty years before, in Sussex across the sea. With memory's eye he could see the red-tiled cottages, the ivied church and the linden-shaded streets, the white roads, with hawthorn hedges and the thatched stables of the antiquated hamlet. The moon above him, almost shrouded in the broken clouds, and the shrill of the katydids in the stirless trees seemed to make the pictures of the past more vivid.

Like many men, the Colonel had not fully appreciated the sterling nobility of his wife until she was gone. His affection had been steady and true, but not demonstrative. He had denied her nothing, and, while toiling at his profession of civil engineer, he had planned varied delights for her

in the future; but that future had been too brief for the realization of many of his plans.

Few men know that it is not costly pleasures or expensive gifts that charm a true woman, but a constant ministry of little remembrances. Not great houses or luxurious apparel, priceless jewels, or foreign travels, but the thousa. little attentions of every-day life. It is the touch of hand or tone of voice, the turn of the head, or the gift of a flower, that sweetens life for her.

A man, when once convinced that a woman loves him, and loves none other, can meditate on the fact and wait a long time before hearing it again. He takes the delightful truth into his nature, and feeds all his sensibilities on it, and girds his loins for whatever task is at hand, toiling on uncomplainingly.

On the contrary, when a woman knows that a man loves her, and none other, she needs frequent expression of that love. The abstract truth seems thin and cold to her unless oft-repeated, lover fashion. And, after her husband has declared seven times in one day that she is the paragon of her sex, the perfect flower in the garden of womanhood, the one fair mortal in all the world to him, she will call him back from the gate, as he starts away, and ask demurely, "Are you sure you love me?"

As the Colonel sat dreaming of his young wife, his gaze wandered across the fields and rested upon the little green and white hill of Laurel Cemetery. There Agnes Satterlee had been laid away soon after her arrival in this new land. A great loneli-

ness came over the soldier as he listened to the lovers singing in the parlor to the music of the quaint old melodeon; and he rose and went quietly to his room. He got out some faded letters, a lock of hair, and a daguerreotype of a refined proud face; and as he kissed the little likeness, a great sigh seemed to come from the depths of his soul. Again the mystic spell of the dear old days gone by was upon him, and he sat thinking for almost two hours, until he remembered that this very day was the anniversary of her death.

An unaccountable yearning seized him, and, putting his mementos carefully away, he stepped out into the silent hall, his room-door closing after him with a self-locking bolt. Out into the open air he passed, and turned through the orchard in the direction of the little graveyard across the fields.

The moon had disappeared; but he knew the path well, and soon climbed the low wall into the city of the dead. Near his wife's grave, in a corner, there was, under a spreading willow, a rustic seat which he himself had placed there years before. He sat down upon it, overwhelmed with his deep feelings. After a time he felt refreshed by his tears, and was about to start homeward, when a covered wagon was drawn up to the wall in the shadow of the trees, and two men came into the burial ground, carrying a dark lantern and some spades. They went to a newly-made grave, and at once began digging into it.

The Colonel, from a lifelong habit, had his revolver in his pocket, and he determined to wait

and see what such work meant. It did not take him a moment to conclude—and rightly, too—that they were a pair of grave robbers, stealing a corpse; and he said to himself, "I will see if I can identify them."

Between him and the ghouls was a lot fenced with an iron railing, and in a corner of the lot a group of boxwood shrubs. Slowly the Colonel crept toward this spot.

The two men were talking in low tones. The lantern shined upon their faces as they stooped over their work, and the man watching them recognized Larry Edmunds, a lank, lantern-jawed ne'er-do-well, who was hostler at the Red Horse Tavern. The other miscreant was a stranger.

Cogitating whether to try to capture them or not, the Colonel's hand caught a pendant of the iron fence. It was a hollow casting in the shape of a funeral tassel, and, unfortunately, in the bell of it some wasps had made a home. His clutch roused them, and they buzzed angrily about him, stinging his face and hands. Brushing them off in his pain, he stirred the shrubs, and the malefactors looked up. He knew he was discovered, and rushed out, pistol in hand. "Halt!" he cried; but the desperadoes, seeing only one man, ran at him. He braced himself for a shot, but his foot slipped in a depression, and the bullet sped too high to stop them. One villain had grasped a stake that marked the head of the desecrated grave, and the other brandished a clayey spade. As they reached him, the soldier uttered a loud cry, and was felled to the earth by a blow from



one of his assailants. A moment later a third man came running from the wagon.

"What 's the row?" he asked.

"We have knocked a spy galley west," said Edmunds.

"Who is he?" the new-comer asked.

Edmunds held the lantern to the face down which the blood was flowing. The wounded man was unconscious, and lay still. As the hostler turned the light upon the white face, he started in surprise, and said, "It is Colonel Satterlee." The raw-boned ruffian was frightened.

"Does he live near here?" queried the other.

"Not half a mile away," Edmunds replied.

"Is he dead? Let me examine him." And the late-comer, who appeared to be the leader, kneeled by the side of the prostrate man, and proceeded to examine him. After a few moments he said:

"He is n't dead. Fill up that grave, quick, Edmunds. Here, Nucksky, help me carry him to the wagon. We must rack out of here at once. Leave no sign, Larry, and hurry after us."

Soon the helpless man was stretched in the long covered wagon, the curtains were fastened, and the party moved up the lane toward the main road.

"What 's your game now, Moulton?" asked the driver, who had been addressed as Nucksky.

"I do n't exactly know what to do next," the leader answered. "If this man is found, he may be restored to consciousness. No doubt he saw Larry, and would expose him, and then the fat would be in the fire. It means a life term if we are caught."

The driver leaned toward Moulton, and said, in a low tone, "What do you say if we finish him and sink his body in the mill dam?"

"No, no," returned the leader, "I 'll never agree to that. I am bad enough now, Heaven knows; but there is no blood on my hands. It would be willful murder, and I 'll never consent to it; never. I wish that woman had n't died of such a strange disease, or that the medical students had never heard of her. We would n't be in this fix then."

"Maybe he 'll cash in his checks anyway," put in Edmunds.

They held the lantern to the old soldier's wan face, but there was no consciousness in his eyes. He was breathing freely, but knew nothing, and moaned feebly from time to time.

"This is bad luck," said Larry; "we 'll have the law on us like a thousand of bricks. It knocks everything out of kilter. We are trapped like dad-burned hyeners, for we can't take him into the city, and we can't leave him here. I wish them college fellers had n't sent us to git a remains fur 'em—dog-gone their picters! Any one over six oughter had sense enuff to keep outen this scrape."

The blackleg called Moulton seemed puzzled; but after some thought, he asked, "Larry, how far are we from the Cave Hills?"

"About two mile, or thereabout," replied the hostler.

"Can we get out there and back to town before sunup?"

"You bet; but why should we go there?" answered Edmunds.

"To cover up our tracks. Keep a stiff upper lip, and do n't snivel."

"All right, sir," responded Larry. "I'll stick to yer closer 'n a tick. But we are queered, I tell you; we could n't win a hoss-race if they waz only two nags in it, an' we owned 'em both."

"Do you know where a nigger named Lige Hull lives?" questioned the foremost fellow.

"Do you mean the overgrown moke who drives the team of knee-sprung skates to the yellow dear-born wagon?" asked Edmunds. "I see him go apast our tavern with his crowbaits offern."

"Yes; he is the man," returned the leader.

"Right enough, I do; but there's slathers of bad goin' to git where he lives. It's the rocky road to Dublin', sure thing," asserted Larry.

"Well, we must pile out there. Drive as quickly as you can," said Moulton, turning to the driver. "Skite the cattle, hotfoot; chuck the whip into them, d' ye hear? We must get this muddled business straightened out."

Edmunds took the reins from Nucksky's hands, and, cracking the whip over the horse's heads, said, "Now, we'll lose no time."

The wooded road was rocky and winding, and ran into a desolate section of the country. A few cattle were accustomed to graze in the thickets, and some patches of land along the streams were cultivated by half-starved tenants. For several generations undefined rumors of an extensive

cavern had given the region its name, "The Cave Hills," but if any one ever knew of such a place, its whereabouts had been lost to the present dwellers roundabout.

Where the main creek cut through a range of hills, close against a bluff, stood a frame house, unpainted and dilapidated. Here Edmunds pulled up the horses. The brawling of the streams on the rocks below was all the sound they heard.

"This is the place," said Larry.

"Call him," answered Moulton.

The driver put a crooked finger in his mouth, and whistled. Soon the door opened, and a huge Negro came out.

"Who dat dar? What's wanted dis.time o' night?" he asked.

"Are you Lige Hull?" asked Moulton.

"Yes sah; dat's me sure."

The leader got out of the wagon, and carried the lantern across the road.

"Come here," he said.

When the black was at his side, he held out his left hand, on which was a silver ring with a green stone.

"Do you understand?" Moulton queried.

"I does, fo' sure; yes, sah, I does. 'Skuse me, boss, 'kase I did n't know you at fust. If I had enny flow of langwidge, I'd 'pollergize bettah, sah; 'deed I would."

"There's an injured man in that wagon. I want you to pack him into the hiding-place, and conceal him for me. Tell Operator No. 1 that Operator No. 11 wants him kept securely till he

inquires for him. It will not be long. Can you do this?"

"Yes, sah."

Moulton peeled off a twenty-dollar bill from a roll, and said: "Keep that; there is more where that came from. Do n't open your mouth to anyone, you understand? Keep mum."

"Yes, sah. I 'se deaf and dumb and blind and numb in my haid; I suttinly is, sah, twell Gabriel toots he'es hohn, sah."

"Do n't mistreat the wounded man. If his mind comes right, watch him; but above all, do n't let him escape."

"All right, sah; you can trust me; you sholy kin, sah."

When the black giant had lifted the sufferer into the house, Moulton said: "Back to town, as fast as you can speed. Do n't spare the horses!"

When the wagon had left the house, Hull bore his burden through the little building into a barn, built flush against the high rocks, and overhung with vines from the great ledge above. His wife followed him, ready to help. Presently he said, "Open de trap, Suze;" and, as she pulled some hay aside, shoved back the rough boards of the side of a stall, and showed a passage into the hill.

The Negro stooped, carrying his charge as if it were a child, and stepped on a steep path, declining into darkness. His wife handed him a lantern, and he strode into the cave, with the man on his shoulders. At the end of the path he crossed a broad floor, and entered a tunnel, which opened upon a wide avenue. A sharp turn revealed a dis-

tant light shining on the nitre crystals along the walls of the avenue, and flashing from the pendant drops of a group of stalactites.

The light proved to be a camp-fire, which ruddied all the gypsum roof of a spacious hall, where a number of men were making false money. The men stopped their work when he came up, and gathered around to look at his burden.

"Heah 's a crippled man that Operator No. 11 told me to keep good care of till he called fur 'um," Hull explained.

"Who is he?" said one.

"I dunno; neber seed him afore," answered Lige.

One of the men some distance away came up, looked curiously at the sufferer, and then suddenly became interested.

"I know him," he said. "He is Colonel Satterlee, of Millbank; my uncle."

The speaker was Major Marley, who, after scanning his relative closely, remarked, "I wonder who has done this, and what it all means."

Stooping, he examined the Colonel's pulse, and lifted his eyelids, and said, "I fear he is seriously injured—perhaps fatally."

Then he searched the Colonel's pockets, finding an account-book, a small sum of money, and a bunch of keys. These things he appropriated, and then gave Lige instructions to take good care of the injured man.

## CHAPTER XI

### The Major is Rejected

A FEW days after the Colonel's disappearance, Major Marley visited the Satterlee home, and stayed a fortnight. He pretended to be entirely ignorant of the whereabouts of his uncle, and seemed to be deeply grieved at the sad occurrence; but his stay was not profitable, for he was conscious that he vexed Philip, embarrassed Edith, and made matters unpleasant for all concerned.

The Major was as determined as ever to win Edith for his wife. He had set his heart on her; but, more than that, she would inherit all of her father's riches, and he dearly loved the distinct, that wealth brings. By hook or crook, he purposed to be rich, and he intended that nothing should hinder him from attaining that end. Thus far, he had pressed his suit in every honorable way; but the intuition that often guards woman had protected Edith.

The Colonel's daughter had grown up with mind unfretted, heart elate, and fancy free. Her environment had been friendly to the development of her nobler nature, and, like all sincere souls, she could not believe that any one was thoroughly bad. Her trustful impulses made her excuse all wrongdoers.

A few days after Major Marley's arrival, she and her aunt were sitting upon the porch, and the older woman was complaining that the grief over the Colonel's absence was killing her.

Edith replied: "The uncertainty is hard to bear. It is terrible; but, Auntie, hope has not yet died in me."

"Well, it has expired in me. I doubt not that your father has been murdered—foully done to death," and the tears came to Mrs. Redmond's eyes.

"Who could be so cruel as to kill him?" Edith asked, looking off across the hills.

"Many are heartless, dear. This is a wicked world. Some find pleasure in ruining others."

"I disagree with you, Auntie. This is a good and honorable world. There is wrong done, but it is exceptional."

"Nonsense, child; how can you prove such an assertion?"

"By one undeniable fact."

"What is that?"

"It is simply this, Badness is news. Have you not noticed how every evil deed is told over and over, while good actions pass by unnoticed? This proves that wickedness is novel, strange, unusual. Righteousness is so common that no recognition is taken of it. It passes unmarked. A hundred clerks are honest, and their names are in no newspaper; one is dishonest, and his name is printed in fifty journals. A thousand wives are faithful, no telegraph wires carry their names; one is faithless, and her name flies on viewless wings far and



wide. A thousand fathers are considerate, dutiful, and kind, and no man asks after them; but one is inhuman, brutal, and the reporters make a path to his door. The human race has already reached such a plane of high development that good things are common, not worthy of record, and sinful actions are accounted notable."

"I had not looked at it that way, Edith. It seems true, blessedly true," and Mrs. Redmond rose and passed into the house.

Edith remained sitting on the verand; a few moments, and then walked slowly down among the trees to the summer-house. The hopeful look had died out of her eyes, for now that her aunt was no longer with her, it was not necessary to cover up her own grief, or to hide the yearning that there was in her soul for the absent one. She wanted to be alone, and sat with her head leaning on her hand, and her eyes half closed. Only the breeze, of all the voices of nature, seemed in harmony with her thoughts; for as it sighed through the leaves over her head, it seemed to whisper and to whisper again,—

"But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!"

"Your eyes seem heavy, Edith; have you been weeping?" a voice broke in upon her reverie, and the Major's burly figure blocked the little doorway.

She raised her head slowly, and replied: "I cry every day over our loss. I feel as if the sun had gone down at noon! I had the best father that

ever daughter had. I have been reviewing the past, and I can't count the deeds of kindness he has done for me."

The great gray eyes filled with tears, and she turned her head away.

"He was a good man, a patriot, hero, and gentleman," returned Marley. "Few are like him."

"You say 'was,' Floyd. Do you think he is dead?" and the pitiful look on her face might have melted a heart of stone; but Marley's was unaffected by it.

"I fear he is lost to us forever," he answered. "It is a mysterious case."

"Is there nothing you can suggest to help us?" she asked.

"Yes, cousin. I hate to see you grieving so. You seem but the ghost of your dead self. I miss your laughter, and your songs, and wish I could bring them back."

"I thank you for your sympathy."

"It is not sympathy, Edith."

"Not sympathy! Then what is it?"

"Edith, it is love!" and for a moment his face lighted, until it seemed almost noble; "a man's long-cherished love. Often have I tried to express it, but hesitated; now I speak," and the Major came nearer, and rested his hands upon the little rustic table at which she sat.

"Floyd, stop! let me speak!" she cried, rising from her seat. He held out a hand, as if to detain her, and she shrank back into her chair.

"Nay, nay, Edith," he said; "I have revealed my secret, and now I must tell all. For fifteen

years I have dared to dream that you would be mine. On the battlefield, and in the daily round of life, I have kept this vision before me. Now, tell me, is there any hope?"

"None, Floyd, none—absolutely none. Dismiss the thought. I am promised in marriage to Mr. Ellis. Had I been forewarned, I would have spared you the pain of a refusal."

"The Captain has won the prize, then. I am out of the race," and a vindictive light glistened in Marley's eyes. In that moment the virus of moral gangrene infected him.

Edith felt a stir of pity in her heart, in spite of her dislike for him. It is doubtful if any true woman can put away a man's affections without a pang.

He turned away slowly; but looking back, asked humbly, "We shall still be friends, Edith?"

"Always, I hope," she said, and he walked away, and was soon hidden by the shrubbery.

Edith rested her elbows upon the table, and buried her face in her hands. A few tears dropped through the slender fingers upon the rough boards, for she was overpowered by a nameless dread, and could restrain her feelings no longer.

A man's figure again darkens the little doorway, but she does not appear to notice it. Then a strong arm encircles her waist, and a dark head is pressed gently against hers, and she hears a deep voice saying, "My darling!" Her white hands are imprisoned in one brown one, and pulled gently from her face, and a smile breaks through her tears, as she says, "Philip!"

In the meantime, Marley had hurried to his room, with an evil intention in his heart. Once behind the shrubbery, and out of sight of the arbor, his humble bearing had suddenly changed, and his slow pace had been quickened. As he entered the house, he looked about him, peering into almost every corner, and then started for his room. Seeing that the coast was clear, he crossed the hall to Colonel Satterlee's locked room.

Edith was the only one who had a key to it, and she entered once every day to read a portion in her Bible.

The Major, however, had the bunch of keys which he had taken from the old soldier in the cavern, and with one of these he opened the door, and stepped quickly inside. He then closed it softly, and placed a chair against the keyhole. The room was dark, save for a little, flickering stream of light that straggled in when the wind blew one of the long curtains away from the sash. To Marley, however, the room and all its furniture were familiar, and he did not venture to disturb the curtains. He made his way directly to a cabinet of carved wood, on the other side of the room, and began trying various keys in the door. Presently it opened, and he began to search through the drawers, and at length drew, from the lowest one, a legal document. Then holding it so that the little stream of light fell full upon it, he read it; and as he read, an evil look flitted across his face. It was a will made by the Colonel before he went to war. His estate and all his handsome fortune were

left to his only daughter, and to the son who had fallen in battle.

Marley put the paper in his coat pocket, carefully locked the cabinet, and had just started for the door, when he saw something white lying upon the floor. He picked it up, and, holding it in the light, found it was a note, asking Edith to meet some one in the arbor at midnight on the coming Wednesday evening, and it was signed "Harold." The Major's eyes protruded more than ever as he read the little slip, and he decided to keep it, saying to himself as he put it in his pocket, "I'll be there, and see that meeting." Then he stealthily slipped out of the room, locked the door, and hurried into his own room.

When Marley was safe behind his own door he again read the will. The lawyer who drew it up had his name on it; also the two witnesses, who happened to be the Colonel's coachman and wife.

"The witnesses probably did not know the contents of the will, but signed at the Colonel's request," so thought Marley to himself. "If I could make a deal with Lawyer Donnelly, I could get half the estate. It would fix me for life. Let Ellis have the girl, if I can get this money."

After tea, he strolled down to the barn, and said to the coachman, "Where can I find Attorney Donnelly?"

"I could n't tell, sir," was the reply. "He died during the war. I dunno where you'd find him now; I'm dubious about that."

Marley chuckled, not at the attempted jest, but at the good fortune. "So," he said to himself, "I am the only one who knows whom the will favors. I shall have it copied in his writing, with my name as a beneficiary of half the estate. Everyone knows I am kin to him. He, doubtless, will never return alive. Luck is with me, surely."

At noon of night on the following Wednesday the Major slipped out of the house by way of a window, and established himself in a tree near the arbor, so situated that he could see the inside of that little structure.

He had scarcely climbed into his hiding-place when Edith came from the house, closely wrapped in a long velvet cloak. In the bright moonlight he could not be mistaken; it certainly was his cousin.

She entered the summer-house, and waited for a few moments, and then came to the door, and looked across the fields toward the city. The moonlight fell full upon her face, and Marley noticed that it wore a worried look. Suddenly, a man's figure appeared on the other side of the low wall, and with a bound cleared it, and followed Edith as she turned back into the arbor. Evidently, judging from his gait and gestures, the man was young; but a heavy cape, with a deep collar drawn up around his face, made it impossible to distinguish his features.

The meeting lasted almost an hour, but seemed much longer to Marley in his cramped position, unable to move for fear of being detected. All he could see was the two figures, dimly outlined,

sitting at the table. Their conversation was carried on in such a low tone that the Major could not hear a word of it. He could only notice that it was very earnest. Finally, both emerged from the arbor. The man stooped and kissed Edith, and then turned without a word and hurried away. She stood watching him until he disappeared down the road, and then hastened back to the house.

When all was quiet again, the Major descended, and made haste to climb in at the window, which he had left open, saying to himself, "I'll give Ellis a blow that will stagger him; but I'll bide my time."

The following day Marley made a trip to the city, and called on a friend at the best hotel. The room into which he was ushered was an office, and adjoining was a bedroom, which displayed the occupant's bizarre ideas of luxury. Heavy curtains of red velvet hung at the wide windows, and portieres of the same material swung before the several doorways of the double room. Two or three costly but inartistic paintings, suitable for a bar-room rather than a living-room, adorned the garish walls. Some antique carvings and a few bits of pottery were in view. A marble statuette of Mercury, tiptoe on an aerial pinnacle, signaled a bronze Psyche on the mantel, beneath which glowed a grate full of ruby anthracite. Stuffed chairs invited to rest, and a glass-eyed horned owl stared from a small bookcase in one corner. A few Indian relics were hanging here and there upon the walls, and several French novels lay on the table.

As the Major entered the room, a bell toned

onyx clock chimed the hour of eleven. Near the fireplace sat a man, well dressed, apparently doing nothing but gazing into the mass of burning fuel. As the visitor was announced, he rose, and came forward to greet him with easy politeness. When the greeting was over, the host turned and locked the door, as if it were a matter of course, and pulled the red curtain in front of it. The Major smiled, and thought, "Deynell is n't to be caught napping."

"Well, what's up now, Major?" asked the doctor, smiling at his guest.

The Major lost no time in making the doctor acquainted with his errand, and soon both their heads were bent over the Colonel's will, which was spread on the table; and Marley was asking, "Do you know of an expert penman whom I could get to reproduce this writing exactly?"

"Yes," the host replied; "I know a great artist in that line of work."

"Can he be trusted to keep mum?"

"Of course; he is one of our Southern agents, and has taken the same oath as all of the operators," answered the doctor, who seemed to ooze secrecy at every pore.

"Will you convey this instrument to him, and return the new one to me with the insertions I have interlined here?" asked Marley.

"I will; provided you help me," said the doctor, his countenance, on which the world, the flesh, and the devil had set their triple imprimatur, showing the strong feeling that filled him.

"In what way?"



"Well, I need your assistance and experience in winning a girl that I have loved for a long while."

"You loved her!" exclaimed Marley, in some surprise, trying on several grins till he got one that fitted, as the wrinkles fit the face of a Japanese idol. "Is she an honest girl; is she of good family?" The Martian had hold of the halter-strap of his hobby, and flung the stable-door wide. "Does she come of good stock?"

"The sunshine never kissed a better. Don't think I am wholly bad; and her people are all right, Major."

As the narrow-minded always boast of their breadth of view, so evildoers rehearse their good traits.

"I once heard a parson in a sermon telling about what the miners call a Sunday-stone," continued Deynell, in his smooth voice. "The dripping water in the mine deposits a sediment which turns to stone. It would be spotless carbonite of lime if it were not for the dust made by the miners, which turns it black. On Sunday the mine is closed, and the snowy formation is unsullied. When the stone is broken through it shows broad, sooty bands, inlaid with stripes of white. This passion for sweet Barbara Lawson is the clean part of my life. I love her above everything on earth, and I would give my right hand to call her mine."

"Have you tried to win her?"

"Yes; but she still refuses to listen to me. Her rejection of me only increases my admiration for

her. Can you help me, Major? Love and war, you know, usually go together; Eros and Mars were ever neighborly."

"I doubt if I can," replied the soldier; "when a woman won't, all the king's troops can't budge her. The boy said Eve was created by taking the backbone out of Adam; and, in my opinion, he seems to be about right. I tried such a chase myself, but got a flat refusal, that jolted my pride severely. However, if I get Satterlee's money, I'll find women enough to smile on me, and I won't tie myself to one, to tote her about after she grows dowdy and gross with age."

"There is only one Eve for me," said Deynell. "If I had her in my power, I believe I could persuade her to accept me. I always fancied myself, you know. There will be little coming to this individual when the meek inherit the earth."

"Where is she?" questioned Marley.

"In a little western town where I was reared," answered the doctor. "You know, I am a self-made man."

Marley thought him considerate to assume this responsibility, and said: "If you had a woman to help you, it would be no great undertaking to get her out of that small place, and into your charge; but it would do little good. She would hate you more than ever. No man ever built his hope on a sandier foundation, my friend."

"My thought is this," returned Deynell, with a smile on his full lips; "I would n't have her injured for a shipload of guineas; but if you could abduct her, and I rescue her, I would then have

a chance to approach her. I believe I could win her if this was done. If I once had all that wealth of womanhood warehoused, I think I could get entire control of it. Once she was mine, all that wealth could buy would be hers, and I would be true to her. Bad as I am, I have never seen a woman I cared an iota for but this one."

"'If' is a big word," replied the Major, dubiously. "If the sky should fall we could catch larks. Where would you have her placed, to be accessible for your vows?"

"One of our Western agencies for the secret operators is on Folly Island, in the river not far from her home," answered the physician. "I go there twice every twelve months. I have some trusty men out there; but I would like you to oversee the work. You have been a soldier, and the danger of the exploit would please you. You are accustomed to 'moving adventures by field and flood,' while I prefer to use diplomacy and act indirectly. If you do this successfully, I will have the Satterlee will transcribed with your name therein. That business is more in my line, and we can aid each other. Will you do it, Major?" All the reptilian nature of the medico emerged in this lengthy speech.

"I will," said Marley, feeling that acquiescence was necessary to the furthering of his own scheme, and having a natural tendency toward intrigue.

After a little further conversation, the two deceivers shook hands, and parted. For awhile the doctor sat by the fire, puffing at a strong, black cigar, and dipping into the future, and he smiled

as his fancy, with rosy pencil, sketched the hour when Barbara Lawson should be his own, and his serpentine plans would all be victoriously consummated.

As he sat gloating over the thought, a faint knock shattered his reverie, and, turning about in his chair, he called, "Come in!"

The door warily opened, and Moulton entered.

"You sent for me?" he said, as he threw himself into a chair.

"Yes. Have a cigar," and a box of Havanas was pushed in his direction. When the one he selected was going freely, he asked, "What's the business this time, Cap?"

"Read that letter first," said Deynell, tossing an envelope to him. It was from his spy at Delhurst, and ran thus, in part:

"I have seen 'the Minty'—Foley—at Lawson's twice, and I fear he will spoil your plans. You know, he is the fellow who got Bat Mooney's deathbed confession, and set Ronan free from prison. He is sharper than an old red fox, and I think he is now trying to bring Ronan and Barbara together again. Unless he is silenced, your cake will be dough very soon. He goes East with cattle every month. I think he stops in Millbank, a suburb of your city, and sees Ronan frequently. If he was out of the way the coast would be clear.

"Yours always,

N. 36."

As Moulton folded the letter, and handed it back, the doctor said: "The writer of that letter is one of us. I keep him in my old village to re-

port everything concerning Miss Lawson. Now, I want to get this old Hibernian sidetracked forever. He suspects me, and will checkmate me unless he gets his quietus."

"Do you want to have him killed?" asked the visitor, hesitatingly.

Deynell's countenance clouded. His cold-blooded deviltry clamored in his breast.

"Yes!" he hissed, whitening; "that is what I want. I want him under the sod. I want his light put out. Let the currish old rip be silenced perpetually!"

The caller shook his head. "It would be risky," he suggested.

"Not very," answered the physician. "He is a nomad, without kindred or friends; here to-day, and gone to-morrow. No one but his wife would miss him, and she would be better without the drunken sot. Will you do it for me?"

"Not I," said Moulton. "I won't shed human blood; I draw the line at that. My hands may be dirty, but they are not red."

Deynell winced, and replied, somewhat abashed: "I won't, either; it is obnoxious work. But others are not so fastidious. Can you find a man who will do it? You shall have three hundred dollars to pay him. I must have this skunk exterminated at any cost. You remember what I did for you, Moulton," he continued, in an insinuating tone. "Take charge of this matter for me as a personal favor," and the arch conspirator looked steadily at the man opposite to him.

"Well," said Moulton, rather unwillingly, "I'll

see about it; but a little of this goes a long way with me. Good-bye!" and he left the room.

A sardonic smile wreathed Deynell's hard face. "I'll venture Foley will be sorry he meddled with me," he muttered moodily.

## CHAPTER XII

### The Preacher in Peril

THE people of Millbank were greatly excited over the accident which had almost cost the new minister his life. They never tired of telling how he and Laura McLaw had been found exhausted upon the bank below the bridge, just out of the grasp of the swollen stream, and how white and unconscious he was, when kind hands had lifted him into a carriage to take him back to the girl's home.

Laura had been able to sit up when they found her, and, in a few days, she seemed to be entirely recovered; but Ronan lay in a semicomatose state for some time. His superb strength had been exhausted by the last brave effort to save his companion, and the reaction had left him almost lifeless. For several days his life hung by a thread.

The town-folk were deeply concerned, for they had formed a favorable opinion of the young preacher. In class-meeting nothing else was talked of, and two of the matrons were appointed to send fresh flowers to him every day. In the midweek prayer-meeting fervent petitions went

up to the Throne of Grace for his speedy recovery. Plainly could it be seen that he had won their faith, and all were anxious to see him restored.

A large, airy room of the lower floor of McLaw's old-fashioned house had been set apart for the sick man, and Laura, who had fully recovered from her fright in the waters, ministered to him daily. She was nurse, companion, and servant, and insisted that her own hands should supply his every want.

After some weeks of unwearied nursing, the sick man grew strong enough to sit up for a few hours each day. He was carried in an easy-chair out under the cedars on the lawn, and would sit and look off across the meadow toward the town, and often his gaze rested upon the little steeple of the church, just visible amongst the trees, a silent reminder of his high calling. Laura would sometimes sit and read to him, or, if he were in a thoughtful mood, she would sit and watch him, and say nothing.

Laura McLaw was a dazzlingly beautiful woman, tall and queenly in stature. Her slightest gesture was full of grace, and her dark eyes had a strange magnetism in their depths. Often she stood, with the poise of Diana, watching the changing expressions on her patient's face, and noting the returning color in his cheek; and a strange, melting look of pleasure would linger in her eyes until some word recalled her to herself. Then, in a moment, she would become alert and attentive. A faint perfume of iris always floated about her, and she had a way of looking at one



steadily, with wide, candid eyes, that suggested something hypnotic in her gaze.

There was a severe cut in his scalp, and as she put aside the clustering curls to apply the healing balm there was a curious wavering in her touch and a suppressed excitement in her face, that told the old, old story of Dan Cupid's silent work. Her pulse, which had always beat as steadily as a pendulum, now raced and danced with wild tumult. At last she had happened upon the man who was able to uncage her fancy and give it daring wings.

Her father would sometimes come and sit by the invalid and talk of the Church work and the condition of the farmers, as if he saw nothing unusual; but the old man was not blind, and could not fail to see the change in Laura. He was only half pleased to note her growing fondness for the young Chrysostom. His soul was wrapped wholly in her, and the thought of giving her to another shook him like an ague. He had exulted when she had refused to accept the attendance of other suitors, and had laughed quietly at their discomfiture. But she was palpably in the toils now. The willful and willowy young charmer was snared at last. A new light was in her eye and a new note in her voice. She, who had never feared the face of mortal, blushed when the minister looked at her.

Even vague whispers of Ronan's former life, hintings of checkered career, did not diminish her feeling toward him, but seemed rather to add to his power.

It is only too true that some women like best a man with a "past."

McLaw, in his hard way, had often boasted of her free and fearless spirit. There was one story that he loved to tell. His own dog, a huge mastiff, chained to a post near the barn, had suffered from the August heat until hydrophobia seized him. In a spasm of pain he tore his heavy chain from its staple, and, running in the direction of the town, went snapping up the main street. Ropes of poison foam hung from his jaws, his eyes were staring, and his whole aspect was fearsome. The cry, "Mad dog!" emptied the highway as the furious beast leaped upon the horse of a huckster, who was crying, "Roll up, good women, roll up, and buy my peaches!" The dog dragged his victim to the earth with a crash, spilling the fruit in the dust. Men pushed rifles from second-story windows, while women, white with fear, huddled their children around them in their houses as the dreaded beast rattled his chain past their doors.

Every shot missed him, and the place was terrorized. No one dared to venture forth. Suddenly, at the end of the street, Laura appeared, riding her pony at full speed. She had seen him break his chain, and knew that it might mean death to many if she did not overtake him. Without waiting to put on her hat, she had saddled her pony and hurried to the village. In front of the smithy she overtook the animal, and, jumping from her horse and hitching him, she ran toward the snarling dog, calling him by name.

Those watching from windows near by were breathless with fright. The creature came toward her, frothing, and reared his body, putting both forefeet on her shoulders. She looked into his awful eyes, and felt his hot breath in her face; but something in her look checked him for a moment. Quickly, without moving her gaze from his red orbs, she grasped his chain, gently forced him down, and led him to a post in front of the smithy, then slipped his chain through a ring in the post, and caught the last link of it in the snap in the ring of his collar. He was fast, and in a few moments men came and shot him to death.

Many men had sought this regal woman, so charmingly imperious, so peculiar in her dark dignity; and one or two had caught her passing fancy for awhile, but they had been analyzed, quickly exhausted, and dropped into forgetfulness. Her heart was as uncumbered and her fancy as fetterless and blithesome as the bobolink tangling himself in the loops of music in the peach-tree by the gate. A close observer could see that now the rosy god with the bow had winged a shaft true to the center of her being. All the vagrant emotions of her strong personality clustered around Beverly.

She it was who had admired him at the college contest, and again during his first sermon she had praised him. Her rescue by his valor and strength had clinched the dart that had penetrated her heart, and every hour she wandered deeper into the intricate maze of life's profoundest experience.

Ronan saw it all, and, remembering Barbara, with her innocent soul and sweet, womanly way, he was affrighted. He knew that a woman of Laura's stamp would put her whole tropical, intense soul into her offering; and he, being candid and honest, felt that trouble was brewing for her.

He noticed her lingering gaze and tireless thoughtfulness. During the first few weeks no day was too long, no night too lonely, for her to linger by his couch. And later, when he was able to sit up, her happiness in his recovery was wonderful. Her devotion, that never flagged, her high spirits, her exultant joy, betrayed that she was bound and led by the master passion. When reading, she faltered at the emotional scenes, and, when singing, she put a meaning into the words that told of her surrender.

Ronan realized that he, years before, had renounced all for this new miracle of the inner life; and now he was not blind to the attraction that it had thrown about her. It was the last perfect element that this rare creature needed to unify all her powers. The fire had descended that fused the variant attributes of her character into one splendid whole. She radiated resistless attraction, and walked as one who trod the high hills. The goddess had come down from her pedestal, glowing like a common mortal; and, after the manner of woman, she craved to make a ruler for herself.

"How goodly she is!" Ronan thought to himself, as he watched her. "But I must stop this.

It is unmanly, wicked." He was comparing Barbara Lawson's winwood air and gentle words with this woman's merciless personality; and he was alarmed to find in himself a sense of triumph in what his eyes daily beheld. He felt his first love disintegrating, the dam slackening, and his sweetheart diminishing in the distance of his thoughts.

"This must end," he kept repeating. "I will let Laura know that I am in honor bound to another whom I love." He, however, hesitated, vacillated, until he was lost. But a bow-shot from the precipice, he drew nearer its edge every day. He little understood human weakness, did Beverly.

How weak are the strongest when untoward circumstances close them round! Beverly felt as if a screen was being drawn before his eyes, hiding his distant dear one, as if a stream was undermining a crumbling bank beneath his feet. The mental struggle was more tempestuous than the buffeting of the muddy tide in Otter Creek.

"I am going over the dam, I fear," he said, one day, when alone. And then he turned to the church spire gleaming white among the trees. His duty became clear, and he was ashamed of the thought. "I will not forfeit my honor," he asseverated. "I will preserve my probity at any hazard."

The next day he and Laura were sitting together in the cool arcade of woven cedar boughs. He was in his arm-chair, and she was sitting on a rustic seat built around a great tree, her head leaning against its rough trunk. The masses of

her black hair shaded her downcast eyes. On her cheeks a faint color showed through the swarthy golden skin, and a smile played about her mouth. Her beautiful, soft hands clasped a book, from which she had been reading, but which was now lying close in her lap. She had stopped at his request, for he had said that he had something to tell her; but now he was silent, and she was waiting for him to speak, not realizing the great struggle going on in his soul.

"Laura," he said, at last; for she had asked him to call her by that name—"it was shorter," she said, "for a sick man."

"Laura, I am almost well. I shall soon be on my feet again."

"I know it," she smiled, "ready for your work once more."

"Yes, and I think I can preach all the better for this mishap. I have done a great deal of thinking the last two weeks."

"I have noticed it," she replied. "I often see you meditating. Of what were you thinking so earnestly, Mr. Ronan?" and, with the sweetest of smiles, she leaned toward him.

"Of many things; but one chiefly. I shall not take up my work in Millbank again," he replied.

"Why?" she asked, in vague surmise; and the bright smile almost faded.

"Because I think it best to go away to some other part of the harvest-field," he answered.

Her face became clouded in a moment, and her voice was agitated, as she asked: "Where will you go? Have you decided?"

"No; but I will go." The man was fighting hard for honor. "I will go." He meant it, and called all his principles to steady him.

She saw his emotion, and felt that the supreme hour had come. Like all her kind, she was ready to stake everything to win her consuming desire. "When will you go?" and her voice shook.

"As soon as I am able to travel. I will go; and when I go, I will never come back. Never!"

She shrank not on the brink, but took the leap. "If you go and never return, what will become of me?"

"Of you, Laura?" His face was rigid, and his accusing conscience clamored in his breast.

"Yes, of me," she repeated; and there was irrevocable determination in the set lips and devouring eyes. "If you go, I will go with you."

"You go with me, woman?"

"To the world's end!" And a passionate sweetness was in her voice. "Beverly Ronan, life is nothing to me without you."

For a moment there was silence. Suddenly Laura realized what she had done, and cried out:

"Forgive me, dear, for this unwomanly outburst. I did not mean to be reckless, but my Latin blood burst over all discretion. My purpose is noble, my heart is pure. I would do no wrong; but since I first saw you my soul has cried out, saying, 'This is my master.' Will you forgive me, Beverly?" she pleaded, with tears streaming down her cheeks and her white hands held out entreatingly.

"I will," said the trembling man. "I will. I feel I am partly to blame."

"No, no," she cried, impetuously, "you are not! It is my own tumultuous ancestry pushing me on. I am helpless. I only know I love you; and, where you go, there I will go."

An expression of sadness and hopelessness stole over her face, beautiful, though in tears, and she sat still, looking off into the distance.

He should have told her of his betrothal to another, and ended the matter at any cost; but he shrank from what would follow. He was still weak; his flaccid nerves and swimming brain could not sustain him. He could not man it through, and so sat silent. The battle was lost by irresolution, aided by bodily infirmity.

Laura could endure the silence for only a moment, and then she rose and walked into the flower garden on the other side of the house, and there, hidden from sight, she sat and wept, while the bees, murmuring around her, seemed to be accusing whisperers; and her collie came and gazed wonderingly up into her face.

During the next three weeks of his convalescence nothing was said about Roman's departure from Millbank; in fact, he had decided to remain there. Laura had won the day.

At last Beverly was well again and able to fill his pulpit. His ministry seemed to be successful. One day he wrote to Barbara, asking her to release him from his vows; but it was with a feeling of guilt and shame. He knew it was a base act, beneath any true man; but he was now in



the toils of a mad devotion to Laura, and felt that he must be free to claim her.

The Sunday after it was written he could scarcely enter his church; and in the opening prayer he broke into tears, to the amazement of the congregation. His sermon was wandering and shallow, and the people said to each other, "The minister is not himself to-day;" and some of the women smiled knowingly at each other as they passed out, their eyes resting on Laura McLaw.

Barbara Lawson, waiting in Delhurst for a missive from her betrothed, was terribly shocked by Beverly's cruel letter. She showed it to her mother, and then took it to Mrs. Ronan, whose eyes filled with tears as she read it.

"Barbara, dear," said that astute dame, putting her arms about the girl, "be strong. Something has gone wrong with Beverly. This is unlike him or any Ronan. He is, perhaps, for the time, enamored by some featherhead. It is a despicable thing, but there must be some explanation. My boy is surely honorable."

Barbara returned home, with eyelashes wet and a great loneliness at her heart. The letter asked for an early answer, and she sat down at once and wrote a womanly note. She was obliged to stop writing several times, to give vent to the sobbing that shook all her frame in paroxysms of woe. The picture of honest, leal-hearted Beverly loomed before her, as he had been in the past, and pictures, too, of her home of the future, with him to lean on, just as she had fancied it a

hundred times. Now all was gone, and there was a dull pain at her heart. Slowly she wrote:

"DEAR MR. RONAN,—I have been greatly shocked by your letter. All my sky, which was so brilliant, is now clouded. I know not why you have done this. I have feared for you since you left your early home. I dreaded that your victories might lift you away from me. Perhaps I was chosen to help you into the kingdom of God, my faith to lead you, and then our paths were to diverge—another was to take your hand, and I go on alone. You ask to be released from your vow to me. My self-respect grants your request. I shall try to repress all thoughts of you, take up my burden, and walk as best I can. I bid you a kind farewell.

Yours sincerely,

"BARBARA LAWSON."

Although it was some distance to the post-office, Barbara determined to mail the letter herself, and so she set out, carrying a parasol, to shield her from the hot sun. She felt in no mood for riding, but preferred to walk. As she neared the village, many faces smiled at her as she passed, and strangers turned and looked after the sweet-faced girl. On this particular afternoon, however, her friends noticed a change in her. Her face was sadder, and the laughing expression had vanished from the brown eyes; but yet, on the whole, it was sweeter than ever, and her voice was lower and sweeter, too.

As she entered the post-office, she was greeted by the postmaster with a cheery "Howdy do, Miss

Barbara." She smiled in response; but it was a sad little smile, or, at least, so thought the evil-eyed man standing in the back room. He watched her drop the letter into the box and go out again into the sunshine of the street, and he thought to himself, "Something has happened to Barbara."

As the postmaster was making up the outgoing mail, the same man was standing beside him. It was Dr. Deynell. The official was sorting the mail, and, when his back was turned, Deynell picked up a letter addressed to Beverly Ronan, and hid it under his coat. The postmaster was unsuspecting; for the doctor was one of his boyhood friends. Soon that individual went to his room in the village hotel.

By a process known to his kind, he carefully opened the envelope, so that it could be sealed again, and read Barbara's letter. He was rejoiced to know that the match was broken off, and said to himself, "I'll make assurance doubly sure."

He then indited a brief note, imitating her handwriting, and saying:

"REV. MR. RONAN:

"DEAR SIR,—Your letter is at hand. I am glad to release you, as I have long suspected your unfaithfulness. I never want to see you again, as Heaven has sent me a superior man.

"BARBARA LAWSON."

When Beverly received this letter, he was surprised, but not hurt. The petrifying process of sin had begun, and he found consolation in think-

ing that she had not loved him very fondly. He dabbled his wings in the dirt of sophistry, and stayed himself by the argument that it was best for them to part. But ever the still small voice within said: "You are on the slant that leads to dishonor. You will end in infamy."

## CHAPTER XIII

### "The Minty" is Captured

ONE Sabbath evening the quaint, box-like church at Millbank was filled with the usual miscellaneous congregation of town and country people.

The elders were intent on getting a view of Canaan when the dominie's soaring wings should bear them up, or on brushing the dew on Jordan's banks when his picturesque phraseology should reveal that storied stream flashing among the acacias and terebinths.

The youngerly folks were glad of the social opportunities offered for cultivating their mutual affinities; and the lovelorn swains and damsels had their tenderness for each other increased by some Flemish interior or happy home scene which he painted in glowing words, fitly chosen.

The music was carried off with swinging fervor; and Ronan, who had tried to forget his unchristian behavior toward Barbara by putting all his powers into his work, was eager to begin his sermon.

The singing was conducted on the old plan of lining the hymns, there being but one hymn-

book in the conventicle, and that one was placed on the pulpit.

Hi Stites, the choir master, tuning-fork in hand, pitched the tunes and took the words of the song, two lines at a time, from the lips of the minister, who read them from the book.

On this Sabbath evening Beverly had read the last two lines of an uncommonly short hymn, which was the last song before the sermon, and had laid the book down to announce his text. Mr. Stites, with his eyes fixed on the floor and his long neck craned forward to catch the next lines, heard the text read. It happened to fit exactly into the meter they were singing, being the words of Jeremiah, "Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there?"

Hi, supposing these words to be the next stanza of the hymn, bawled out lustily, and the juniors, seeing the fun, helped him to sing the preacher's text to the end.

Ronar, somewhat abashed, began his sermon, but was soon at great liberty in his exposition of the passage. He had just reached "Secondly," and was moving along with an impassioned stride, when one of the doors opened and a wrinkled, little man looked in. All the seats near him were packed, but he saw a vacant place far forward, in the Amen Corner. He tiptoes toward it, not noticing that his dog, a lean, yellow, stump-tailed hound, with mournful eyes and cockle burs hanging to his legs, was at his heels.

Half-way up the aisle a split-hair terrier, that a country woman had smuggled into a pew saw the

## "The Minty" is Captured 177

other dog pass, and, with a growl, flew at him. The hound seemed scared, and ran up to the altar rail, over which he leaped just as the other seized him. Snarling and snapping, they rolled, over and over, across the floor in front of the platform.

The preacher stopped talking, and, grasping the water pitcher on the pulpit, he poured its contents over the enraged beasts. The water made a geyser above the whirling mass of hair and teeth, and splashed upward into his face and over his shirt front.

By this time the bad boys had climbed upon the back seats and were shouting in glee: "Sic him, Tige! Shake him, Sport!" while the house was in an uproar.

Some of the elders got stove wood from the wood-box and, from a safe distance, bombarded the warring curs; while Ronan, crouching behind his pulpit, heard the "bang! bang!" of their cannonading, and felt the impact of their missiles as they struck the sacred desk.

The battle raged on unchecked, the tumult growing apace, until a man grasped the long pole used in pushing up the window sash, and prodded the bloodthirsty contestants. Then they parted, and the terrier was captured by his horrified owner and carried away.

The other retreated like a hunted wolf into an angle of the wall, and menaced all who came near him.

"Open the door," said a wise granger. "Give him a chance for his life, and he will take it."

No sooner was the door pulled open than the

saffron-colored disturber bolted for it. As he passed the first pew, a man kicked him, howling, across the aisle. A boot on the other side tossed him back, and he struck the pew head with a soggy thud. He was up again, however, and ran the gauntlet of heavy shoes, flung back and forth in his zigzag flight, till a hob-nailed millhand hoisted him through the portal into the road, where he could be heard ki-yi-ing his way toward home.

All thought of religious meeting was vain now; so the discouraged pastor said: "We will rise and sing, 'I would not live away,' and then we will be dismissed."

As the people filed out, a man passed forward, caught the preacher's hand, and said, "'T was a great sermon you gave us to-night. Faith, it was that."

"Why, Barney," exclaimed Ronan; for it was no other than "the Minty." "What good wind blew you here?"

"I 'll soon tell you that, Beverly. I work for the drovers now, an' I am in wid a drove of steers for the stock yards. We are stoppin' at the Red Horse Tavern beyant, an' I come to church on an errand to you."

"To me? What is it?"

Barney smiled assuringly, and said: "I can't tell ye just now; but come along wid me, an' you 'll soon find out."

Ronan went to the door with him, where an ancient carryall was in waiting. At "the Minty's" request he stepped into the vehicle, and they were quickly driven to the "Red Horse."



To Beverly's surprise, the little inn was all lighted and full of people. The moment the carry-all stopped at the door, the hostess came out and said: "We have a wedding here to-night. My daughter attends your Church, and is to wed a young drover from the West, who comes here every two months. Mr. Foley told us he knew you, and would get you here for the service. My girl wants you to tie the knot. Says no other parson can do it to please her."

Ronan was thinking fast. "Let me see the young couple at once," he said.

"Come this way, sir," the landlady replied, leading the way to a back door.

In a small room he found them, waiting for the hour—a buxom bride and honest-looking groom. Seeing that no one else was in the room, he said, "I am sorry to disappoint you; but I have not the power to marry any one."

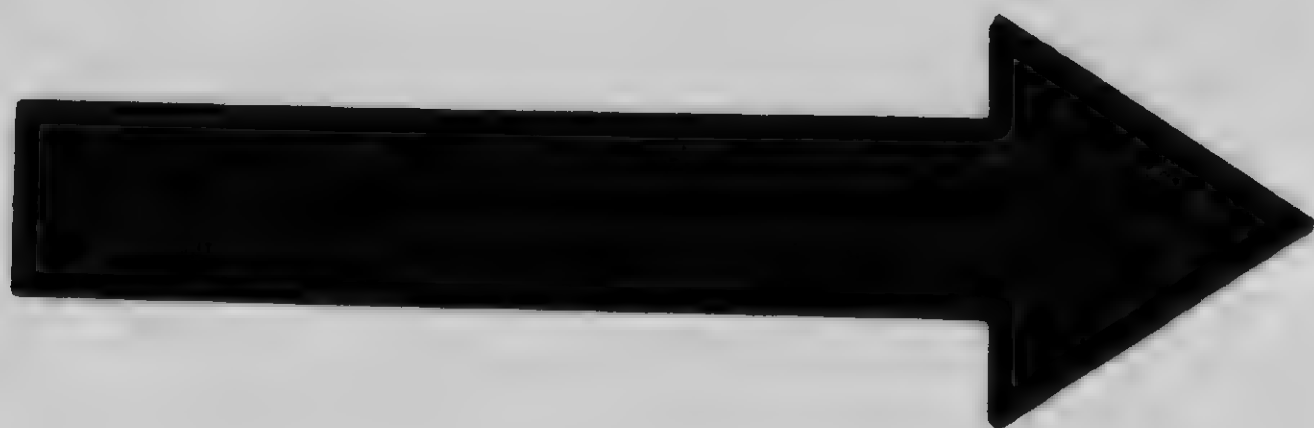
They stared, and the man asked, "Are you not a clergyman?"

"I am," Ronan returned, "but in our Church a young preacher is not ordained until he has been two years in the work; and so I have no authority to perform this marriage ceremony."

The lass was ready to cry with vexation. "My wedding will be spoiled; it will bring us bad luck!" she exclaimed.

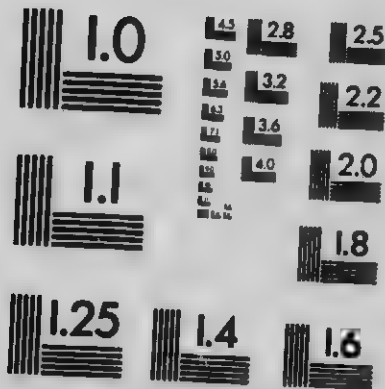
"No, no," said Ronan, "tell me this: Where does the nearest minister or justice of the peace live, any one who has the power to marry folks?"

"The only one within three miles is old Local Preacher Salmon," replied the girl. "He some-



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone  
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

times marries couples; but—but I had set my heart on having you," she pouted, charmingly.

"You must swallow your disappointment," the preacher answered. "The wedding must go on, or there will be a scandal. I will go with Mr. Foley and wake up the old man and get him here in half an hour. In the meantime, say nothing about the delay. Let the guests wait."

The two men drove to Salmon's cottage, called him out of bed, and hurried him to the back door of the Tavern. Every one was anxious for the ceremony, and in a few moments the blushing bride and proud groom were made husband and wife, and all the wedding guests sat down to a heaped table.

Ronan slipped away as soon as possible; and he and Barney rode home together. At the gate "the Minty" said:

"Bev, there is something I do n't like at ould Delhurst. Whin I wuz there the last time, I saw Barbara Lawson, an' she is that changed I hardly knew her. Her round cheeks and bright eyes are gone altogether. She looks broken, an' shuns the people about her. She do n't go anywhere but to church, an' I wuz tould 'at she gave up the choir becuz she bruk out cryin' in the middle o' the singin'. I believe, Beverly, she is pinin' away, fadin' like the mist on the Kerry Hills. I'm afraid she ain't long fer this world. Do ye know anythin' about it? I dunno." And the man's little eyes were seeking to read Beverly's face.

"I do not, Barney. What you say is a surprise

to me. Our engagement was broken off some time ago, but she seemed to care very little about that. Her last letter said Heaven had sent her a better man than I."

"There is something wrong, Beverly; I feel it in me bones, an' whin I git back to that part o' the land I 'll just put one foot afore the other, an' find out what it is. That I will, or I niver saw the gap o' Dunloe," said Foley.

"There is nothing wrong at all," replied Beverly. "I have the letter in her own writing."

"Ye have?"

"Yes, sir; I have."

"If I go into yer shebeen, would ye let me see it?" asked Barney.

"Yes," the preacher answered; "you are her friend and mine, and you may see it. It is curt and decisive, and cuts off our friendship completely. It is a bitter epistle, and greatly pained me. Come in and read it." And he turned and led the way into the house.

After Barney had read the note, he said, "You still love little Barbara, Bev?"

"That 's a leading question, Barn. I will say, however, that she is one of the salt of the earth. Happy is he who has won her. She is too good for me," he added, after a pause. It came from his deepest nature. Barbara's hand it was that had led him into highways of holiness. Her faith had ordained him rather than a bishop's touch. Her love, years before, had consecrated his young life, like the precious oil poured on the

priest's head. "Too good for me," he repeated. "I am not worthy to touch the hem of her garment."

"Thruer fer ye, Beverly. No man alive is worthy of such a woman as Barbara Lawson. It sometimes 'pears to me 'at the worst woman is better 'an the best man; an' she is near to being an angel. I dunno but she is one, strayed away from heaven fer a little while; and' she's soon goin' back."

Ronan sighed and looked dejected, and his visitor went on, "Beverly, would ye let me tell ye a story, me boy, an' ye 'll not be vexed?"

"Certainly, go on.

"Well, onct upon a time, in the ould Dart, there wuz a priest who wuz a foine orator. Throngs kem from fur an' near an' staid outdoors all night to hear him. It wuz like a fair, so it wuz, to see the big crowds around, with the black gown amongst 'em.

"Onct he discoursed about high livin', an' tould 'em to ate plain food. 'Stir-about,' he sez, 'an' spuds an' herrin',' he sez, 'are good enough fer yer poor, dyin' bodies, ye worms o' the dust, wid a bit o' bacon an' a sup o' tay on the Sawbath,' he sez.

"His landlady had cooked fer him a rich meal of fowl an' puddin', but, hearing this sarment, she thrun it all to the pigs in her shame, an' set only oat-cake and milk afore him. 'Where,' he sez, 'is the fat dinner?' he sez. 'In the sty,' she sez. 'I heard your sarment.' 'Mrs. Duffy,' he sez, 'when ye went to a christenin' ye have seen the people

"The Minty" is Captured 183

dancin', he sez. 'I have,' sez she. 'Did ye ever see the piper dance?' he sez. 'I did not,' she sez. 'Well, then, Mrs. Duffy, I am the piper,' sez he.

"Now, Beverly; ye tell the folks to do right; will ye not do right yerself wid Barbara?"

"God forbid," said the minister, "that I should wrong any one, least of all that gentle soul!"

Barney's keen eye had observed Ronan putting the note back in his desk, and he noted where he had pigeon-holed it. In a moment he asked, carelessly, "Could ye give me a noggin' o' water to drink, Bev? I'm that dhry I can't spit."

"Of course," said Ronan, and left the room to procure the water. In a moment Barney had transferred the note to his pocket, and had returned the empty envelope to its place in the desk.

As he pocketed the letter, he said to himself, "This is a dirty Irish thrick fer ye, Barney Foley; but Heaven will forgive ye if ye kin save that girl from an early grave."

In a few minutes he had said good-bye to Ronan, and was driving slowly back to the "Red Horse."

"I wud dip me fut in the river o' death to bring 'em together agin, an', by the grea' horn spoon, I'll do it," he vowed, as he rode along the turnpike at the witching hour of midnight.

The lights in the toll-house were out, and the bar was raised. Millbank lay asleep. The crowing of an untimely cock at a distant farm and the babbling of the creek that threaded the gloomy arch of the stone bridge were the only sounds heard in the silence which night laid, like a moth-

er's quiet palm, upon the brow of the dreaming earth.

The team of deliberate plugs were plodding into the shadows of the willows beyond the brook, when a man stepped out and caught the horses by the reins. They did not shy or lunge; for they knew him well—it was Larry Edmunds, the hostler at the Red Horse Tavern.

Before Barney could speak, two men were in the vehicle, dragging him to the ground. He showed fight as best he could, and kicked one of his assailants in the face, hurling him to the earth. But the man was up again, and, although bleeding profusely, helped in beating "the Minty" into a state of non-resistance.

"What does this mean, Larry," asked Barney, when permitted to speak.

"Ask me no questions, an' I'll tell you no lies," quoth the hostler, grimly.

Foley was gagged, bound hand and foot, and thrown into the carriage; and Larry turned the span into the uneven lane which led to the Cave Hills.

In the edge of the woods, half a mile from Lige Hull's blind, the conveyance was stopped. Two of the men got out, taking Barney with them; and Larry drove back to the tavern. The next morning he told that Foley had returned about midnight, and had turned over the team to him, saying that he intended to walk into the city, and take a train for his home in the West. Also, that he had requested the hostler to ask the boss to pay his wages when he next met him in Delhurst.



## "The Minty" is Captured 185

"That 's odd," said the head drover when he heard the message; "but I guess he has kept sober as long as he could. He must go on a bat about every so often."

In the meantime, Barney, blindfolded, and with his hands bound behind him, was led through the tall timber to the domicile of the Negro, Lige. Without waking the snoring son of Ham, the two footpads, with their victim, passed through the barn into the chill, moist underworld.

Barney knew that he was amid subterrestrial scenes, by hearing the men light torches, by the echo of their voices, and by the sound of dripping water, as they walked over the naked, rocky floor.

They did not take the wide path to the work-room of the note-printers; but, turning to the right, crept under a ledge of spar, and followed a path so narrow that they were obliged to walk single file. This led to a series of rooms, and after these they entered a tremendous rotunda, with a dome of blue limestone, unpropped by any pillar or column.

In the center of this rude arena a large pile of rocks appeared, probably shaken from the roof by some earthquake in a past age. To the farther side of this area they marched, and entered a smaller room, where a light was glowing, and four men were seated, smoking and playing cards.

"We are on time," said one of the new arrivals; "and here is our man."

A medley of shouts and greetings arose, and amid the din "the Minty" was hustled toward the torches, which were placed upon a flat-topped

rock near the middle of the apartment. He was ordered to sit upon a convenient stone, while the bandits settled his fate.

"There is three hundred dollars in this for the person who will put an end to this interloper's life," said Moulton, who was one of the newcomers. "Who wants the job?"

Though several of the men looked fit to cut a throat, there were no volunteers. Not a word was spoken. Evidently they were not ready to commit premeditated murder.

"Let's draw lots to decide who will do it," said a vicious-looking old man.

"No," said another; "I won't agree to that. I'm no butcher, I tell you."

"Well," exclaimed the man whom Barney had kicked, "what will you do with this codger? The Cap wants him croaked, an' he'll give us blazes if we do n't do it. An' he knows our hiding-place now. What'll you do with him?"

"Tell you what I say," he continued, after a pause, mopping his bruised face with a handkerchief; "t ain't more 'n five hundred feet to the hole Cap calls the bottomless pit. Ye can hear the water boilin' in it from here, if ye'll shet up yer jawin'. Let some one take this yere infernal spy an' put a bullet into his head, and chuck him into that ere openin'. That's the way, I say. He'll be dead an' buried in one clip, an' no questions asked, consarn him!"

"Will you do it?" asked Moulton.

The injured ruffian quailed at this

"Naw," he said, with a leer. "I kain't do it."

"The Minty" is Captured 187

Blood do n't wash easy off 'n yer hands. Let some o' you older fellers tackle it."

"Well," said the leader, sarcastically; "here's a pretty kettle of fish. A lot of operators want a thing done, and every one of them afraid to do it. I am surprised to see every one of you sniveling."

"Not every one, sir. I ain't afeerd. I 'll do it, an' do it quick!"

They all looked at one of the party, who had been silent since the captured man had been brought into the room. He was standing, and his face, scowling in the fitful glare of the lamps, showed that he spoke with determination.

"Good man, Forty-four!" ejaculated Moulton. "Look, you spaniels; one of our new men sets us all a lesson in boldness! Make the victim ready at once, and let this job be done; I am sick of it now! How will you finish him, Forty-four?" he asked, turning toward the volunteer.

"O, easy enough! One of you lend me a pistol. I 'll take him to the edge of the pit, put a bullet through his brain, and shove him over. Is he ready 'for the leap? Lemme bite yer tabacker, podner."

"I think," said another, "that we ought to give the friendless devil a chance to look around once more before he dives down among the dead men; and let him say his prayers on the border of eternity."

"That's fair enough," agreed the others. And Barney's eyes were unbound. He stared around the somber crypt under the roots of the eternal

hills, and sat in silence, so intense that he could hear his burdened heart throbbing like a trip-hammer in his breast. Dungeoned in a mausoleum built between the granite ribs of the old globe, he felt that his last hour had come. Hope died within him as he looked about.

Some subterranean river had found a soft stratum of limestone between two hard strata, had slaked or dissolved it away, and left a series of cyclopean rooms, ceiled with awful spans of primeval masonry. The stream, with hunger unsated, had gone down through the crevices, and had fashioned another cavern below. The rocks rang hollow to the feet, and in some places, through the openings, rushing water could be heard.

One gigantic stalactite, growing through the dateless ages, had attained such enormous weight that it pulled its stony roots loose, and, falling, crashed through the pavement into the cave below, leaving a jagged shaft so deep that a blazing newspaper, flung down its throat, died on the vision, and revealed no bottom to the abyss.

This yawning pit was to be the careless-heart's "Minty's" unmarked tomb. The poor fellow scanned the faces of the cruel six, but all were utter strangers to him. No hope for a friend among them.

"If you have any prayers, Foley, now is the time to use them," said Moulton, abruptly.

Barney knew that there was nothing to be gained by showing the white feather. He felt that he had to die, and resolved to die like a brave man.

## "The Minty" is Captured 189

"I know a few prayers," he answered; "but it's not till this time I've waited to say them."

"Do you realize you have but a few minutes to live?" said one.

"'Tis very likely," answered the wayfarer. "I see no sign o' mercy in yer ill-begotten faces. An uglier pack o' scoundrels niver went unhung; but I would ask two favors."

"Talk fast," said Moulton, who did not relish the doomed man's bold accusations.

"Fust, chin," said Foley, "give me half a chanst fer me life; untie me arrums, put a knife or some weepoon in me hand, an' let the mongrel drove o' ye come at me, one by one; I'll face ye all!"

They laughed mockingly at this defiance; and Barney continued: "If ye won't do that, ye craven-hearted wolves, tell me why ye mane to destroy me. Sure, I niver harrumed one o' ye."

"You meddled in Dr. Deynell's affairs, my man," said Moulton, "and he wants you out of his way. There is a price on your head, and Number Forty-four wants the shekels."

"Blood-money will never prosper him," replied Foley; "but I suppose you must have yer will o' me; I am helpless."

He rose, and looked upon them, seeming strangely prophetic as his face paled in the flickering glow.

"Men," he said, "I go to my grave this day, done to death by a herd o' misguided mortals. My last word is this: I would rather be Barney Foley, lyin' mangled on the rocks below, than one o' ye. Doomsday is comin'; remember!"

"Shut up, you flannel-mouth!" exclaimed one of the men.

"That's enough!" broke in Moulton. "We want no heroics here. You will be better below hatches." Then, turning to the crowd, he ordered, "Bind his eyes, and let Forty-four take him away!"

Blindfolded, and with his hands fastened behind his back, Barney was led toward the fated spot. Moulton had loaded his pistol carefully, and given it, cocked, to the assassin. The others watched the twain until they reached the brim of the gulf on the extreme edge of the circle of light. They saw the dim outlines of the men as they halted, Foley next to the bottomless pit. Slowly the murderer lifted the revolver, put it to "the Minty's" head, and then the crash of the shot rang echoing through the stillness, mingled with a heart-piercing scream, as a helpless form fell downward.

It is an appalling thing to see a human soul take flight, disrobed, by a murderer's bloody hands, of its mortal raiment.

Shudderingly the men turned away at the weapon's sharp explosion. While the noise still reverberated in the dome, and went echoing lamentingly through the vacant room, they beheld No. 44 rushing toward them, with the smoking weapon in his hand, crying, "Give me four fingers o' coffin varnish—pour a jigger of it quick! I'm all broke up!"

As he gulped down the fiery liquor, they noted that he shook like one with palsy. In his haste, he choked, and half the grog was spilled. They al-

## "The Minty" is Captured 191

most pitied him as he took the money from Moulton.

The leader said, as he handed it to him, "This is not our home-made money; it is good money."

"It is cursed bad money," said No. 44, remorsefully; "an' the last I 'll ever earn in this way. This business o' killin' folks tuckers me more 'n anything I ever see."

Drawn by some fascination, several of the brigands wandered to the edge of the chasm, and looked into it. Only the distant dashing of water churning against the bowlders in the uncharted blackness of fathoms below, could be heard. It seemed the yawning mouth of Sheol.

"That bog-trotter's gone to kingdom come by a queer route," said one.

"We put a crimp in him for keeps," said another, as he carromed a stone down the hideous well.

A shudder shook some of the despoilers, as they turned away from the awful scene; but one was about to roll a larger rock over the edge, when the assassin said:

"Do n't do that. The man's dead and gone; ain't that enough? I do n't believe in punishment after death."

With this cadaverous joke, the scurvy six left the lethal shaft, and, gathering up their belongings, walked out of the rotunda, never looking back.

Soon their footsteps resounded far away, and the last glimmer of their torches faded out. The chamber of death was possessed again by silence and darkness.

## CHAPTER XIV

### A Stolen Letter

ON a morning in the picture-month, October, Philip Ellis felt an irresistible desire to shoot game, and, taking down the Colonel's double-barreled shotgun, his powder-flask, and shot-belt, he whistled up the pointer, Pluto, and set out to seek a covey of quail, which the hired man had told him were to be found in the upland stubble above the milldam.

Several months had passed since Ellis had first come to the Satterlee home, and still he staid, more because Edith, who grieved about her father, seemed to need him, than for any other reason.

The Major, too, had prolonged his visit, greatly to Philip's disgust; for the tender glances which the older man cast at Edith were a vexation to the Captain. A few days before, Philip had been fretted more than usual by the Major's actions, and had said to Edith: "You never drew that fellow on, did you dear, by any encouragement? It is plain that he worships you."

There was no guilt in her eyes, as she answered: "I never did, Philip; never. He has liked me for years, but I have looked on him with indifference."



"Well, I can't blame him very much. You are lovely enough to turn any man's head," he replied.

A smile was her only answer.

"I hope," continued Ellis, "that he will keep out of my way. I do n't like his loafing about here. Ho, ho!" he exclaimed, in a kindlier mood, "I must not be domineering. He was here before I was, and he can do no harm. Poor fellow!" he said, as he took Edith's hand; "he is in bad luck."

And so the days had passed. The two men, living under the same roof, were merely civil to each other. Both sympathized with the bereaved girl; but the sympathy of one was sincere, while that of the other was assumed and false.

As Ellis, with the shotgun over his shoulder, climbed the long hill back of the great mills, he was thinking deeply. The day was a glorious one. The air was like wine, and rarely had he so keenly felt the joy of mere being. To live was a rapture; simple existence an ecstasy. The red wine of some Olympian feast seemed spilled in riotous color down every glen, creeping into every cove of the hills, flushing every fold of the landscape.

The early frost had touched the foliage into the autumnal splendor of purple, ruby, and amethyst. The elms along the creek were robed in chrome, the chestnuts in topaz, the beeches in copper-green. The rock-maples were brave in scarlet, the beeches swathed in buff, and the sumachs held up their lighted torches along every woodland dell. Moses' miracle of the burning

bush was seen everywhere; Midas had passed through every yellowing copse, and, over all, the lazulite heaven.

"A man can't be blue over twenty minutes on such a day as this," said Ellis to himself, as he plodded up the hill.

Gradually the hum of the factories grew fainter. When he had reached the summit, he looked back over the valley, where the small houses of the poor operators were huddled helplessly together, and sighed, as he thought how the workers toiled, for a pittance, in dust and heat, selling their frail lives by inches to keep body and soul from death's divorce. How they went out, at the sound of the bell at dawn, and dragged themselves home at dusk from the great five-storied Babels, with their smoking stacks and chuffing steam-pipes.

His heart ached at the thought of the small piecer-boys at the spinning-frames, working overtime for a paltry wage—three dollars a week—when they should have been swimming in the creek, or shaking nuts from the boughs in the beckoning woods. And, sadder still, were the pallid, weary lasses, barely chin-high to the crashing looms, breathing vile fumes, and hearing foul words flung through the ceaseless clang of the lathes.

Below the mills the sluices were visible, vomiting dye-water into the brooks, till no fish could live in them, and no flower bloom on the rotting banks.

"How do the poor creatures keep heart in such a bitter struggle?" Ellis asked himself. "It

is little better than a shambles where they are driven, young and old, to slow destruction." The thought maddened him. He knew that the children went in, pure as the laughing stream that leaped through the headgate, and that they came out almost as sullied as the tail-race that crept from the vats to the creek.

Even at that hour, small-pox was spreading among the tenements, and the doctors were busy haling every one to compulsory vaccination. The school was closed by the breath of the plague, and at Church, the Sunday before, the funeral services of two girls, swept away by the "pestilence that walketh in darkness," had been announced.

Thus, Ellis sat musing on life's burdens, heedless of the dog, who was quartering the field, and peering into the grass and brambles for game. The young man did not see the vervain dancing on the breeze, nor the walnuts turning to globes of bronze on the high-spreading trees, nor the chestnut-burs, half open for the North wind's kiss. At a farm near by, creaking wagons were bearing apples—russet and red, bellflower and pippin—to the groaning cider-press near the barn; but Ellis was oblivious of it all, till he heard a call, and, turning, saw a man coming toward him, wading through the fading marigolds that flaunted saucily on a piece of drained land, making it beautiful as a bit of ancient arras.

It was Beverly Ronan, buoyant and eager. The two men had met some two months before, and had resumed the friendship begun in the dreary prison at C—. Often, in the little town

of Millbank and the country round, they met, and were always glad to talk with each other. Edith was a member of Ronan's Church, and she and Ellis were much interested in the new pastor. So he waited under a memorial oak, which upsurged its multi-colored boughs toward the sumptuous skies. Far off he heard the flood brawling over the breakwater, and the distant birr of the spindles was like the drone of bees.

"Good-morning, Captain," the preacher cried, stretching out his hand as he came up to the hunter. "If you get any quail to-day, I wish you would send a brace to that cottage there," pointing to a tiny house just below them.

"Why do you wish that?" Ellis asked.

"There is a sad case of sickness there. A boy of thirteen is down with the smallpox," replied Ronan.

"Has he passed the crisis?"

"Yes, and lies there weak and bloodless. I doubt if he has reserve power to pull him through."

"Are you not afraid to visit these people who have contagious diseases?" Ellis asked.

"O no; I am in no danger. No infection can touch me," the preacher replied, confidently.

"Why not?" exclaimed Philip, in surprise.

"Simply because I am overflowing with vitality. The sea can not send its bitter waters into the river's mouth; but the river drives its wedge of crystal twenty miles into the brackish bulk of the ocean. The outflowing stream is the best protection; better than sea-walls or jetties is the unhalting flood."

"You enjoy rare health, I see," said Ellis.

"I do that," said Ronan. "The years I spent at my father's trade, and my college training, help me now. See that!" he said, as he took a piece of shale from the road, and flung it up, till it died in the blue overhead, and fell far afield.

"Look here, Ellis," he continued; and shook a haw-tree at his side, till the red fruit freckled all the grass.

Philip laughed, and said: "You are a vigorous chap, Ronan. You have muscles like cables, and sinews like the thews of a rock-maple. I wish I had your animal basis for bearing life's burdens, and meeting its emergencies."

"Did you ever notice," Beverly asked, "when reading your New Testament, how the Savior touched the lepers? No other human being would do it. They shunned their fellow-men, crying, 'Unclean, unclean!' He came close, and handled them. They could not contaminate him, but he could vitalize them. He ate with publicans, lodged with sinners, consorted with the offscouring of the earth. He lighted up the lowly places, like a sun-beam in a stable, and came forth as unscathed."

"You believe in enthusiasm, then?" said Ellis.

"I surely do—it is the deepest law of progress. Our Church is suffering greatly now from a scarcity of faith-intoxicated crusaders. Alas! it is a critical age, and the people are all slack in zeal. Once they said, imperiously, 'Send us an inspired man;' now they say, languidly, 'Send us an educated man.' Once they wanted only a man with a message; and now, only the man with a diploma.

Once they desired the preacher to give them an hour in a chariot of fire; now they prefer forty minutes in an ice-wagon."

"Your spirit is delightful, Ronan. You warm the cockles of a man's heart with your exuberance. Your thoughts flash like that turmoil of swallows around the chimney there."

"I hope so. Well, salaam, Ellis; I must be going. Don't forget the birds for the sick boy. Success to you!" and Ronan turned and walked away.

"Good-day, parson," said the hunter, and he watched the young preacher's athletic figure until it was hidden by the brow of the hill, and then turned to cut across the fields.

As he strolled along over the stubble, he was saying: "I can't remember when Nature has seemed so fair. It is a day to breed life beneath the mask of death. Even the hayricks seem fair in the opalescent glow through which the burnished pigeons are wheeling." All the world was very rosy to the Captain; but no wonder; he was fathoms deep in love and all "the light that never was on sea or land" threw its glamour over all the scene. How wide is the spirit's range, when the grand passion gives it wings! All unplumed deeps, all astronomic steeps, are within its tether.

He smiled, thinking fondly of Edith, and with exalted resolution he girded up the loins of his soul, saying: "I'll win a high name for her dear sake. What is worthiest in me, that will I do."

How chill the ocean of life would be without the warm gulf-stream of love, with its tidal flow

and magnetic current, its zest and sparkle, its freshness and sufficiency.

His good resolve made Ellis happier than before; and he began to hum,—

"There's nothing half so sweet in life  
As Love's young dream."

Suddenly the position of the dog Pluto caught his eye. The pointer was fixed beside a hollow, overgrown with briars and vines, near a gap in a mossy wall.

"What is it, Pluto? The quail?" asked the Captain, as he crept slowly to the rim of the bowl-like dip in the earth. It was a sinkhole, a peculiar pit or cavity found in that region, underlaid with limestone. Subterranean streams had slacked or dissolved the soft stratum beneath, and the surface waters had found natural drainage in these trenches, to fall at last into caverns far below.

The hunter was disappointed, for no game was found, and he roamed on. Soon, however, his thoughts reverted to Edith.

"Lucky man am I," he said to himself. "Fate seems to be trying to balance up my hapless youth. I do n't wonder that Jacob's seven years of servitude for Rachel seemed but a little while. I wish I could serve for her, or do something to show how much I care for her. O Edith, I will be worthy of you! Never man to woman gave truer affection." And the Captain's thoughts wandered on, he scarcely realized where.

"How gracious she is! how altogether perfect! Her deep, gray eyes have every jeweled change

as they mirror her pure thoughts. Her brown hair, sunlit or shaded, how lovely it is! How sweet her tremulous mouth, revealing in its tender curves her womanly sensibilities! What grace in her walk! how lightsome her poise!"

"Alack!" he cried, suddenly. "I am a witless sportsman; I am a good imitation of a lovesick youth. I can not think of my hunting, or of myself—only of her." And he quoted from Locksley Hall:

*"Love took up the harp of Life,  
Smote on all its chords with might;  
Smote the chord of Self, which, trembling,  
Passed in Music, out of sight."*

"That's it, exactly, O poet!" he cried. "Self dies to sweet music when Love masters Life."

Ellis was nearing a small, limpid brook, bordered with brambles and dwarf trees, that wound its way through the field. An upspringing thrush dipped the alder beads in the stream as she mounted into the blue, all unnoticed, for the Captain was whispering: "Ho, Pluto, wait! Now you have them; steady, old chap, steady there!" And the dog was advancing on a brush-pile, fringed with goldenrod, near a group of slender birches. Pluto's ears were alert, and his tail was flagging the hunter to his duty.

"It must be a rabbit," thought Philip; and he bent to his knees, peering into the heap. "Go on, Pluto; find him," he urged; "that's a good fellow."

Whir-r-r! and a cock-partridge went straight up into the air, and was out of range before the



gunner could make ready. Disgust was an inch deep on the dog's features, as he walked slowly away, seeming to say, in canine dialect, "You are the very worst!"

On the other side of the stream, just above the place where the braided brooks came together to flow toward the old dam, Ellis found a milking-yard, shaded by leafy buttonwood-trees. It was a charming spot. Below him the broad waters slept, in crinkled azure, from shore to shore. Two boys, upon a raft, were at play, making believe they were in the Far West, upon an unfrequented lake, pursued by hostile red foes; and over the high breast of the dam the flood poured, a clear sheet of water, which seemed a wind-shaken banner, shot through with the javelins of the sun.

Around the spot were tall poplars, and from the thicket came the kinebells, as the herd went down the hazel aisles, to drink and browse. In the open, a quag made a home for muskrats, whose conical habitations were hid in calamus and cat-tails.

The place, apparently deserted, offered a desirable resting-space, and the Captain had soon taken possession of a rude seat near by, and had fallen into a reverie, broken only by the raucous call of a kingfisher arising from the water, with his red-finned prey, scripting the glassy surface with drops from his wings.

Abruptly, he was disturbed by a voice, crying, "Hello! Ellis; how are you to-day?"

"None the better for seeing you," replied Philip; for the new arrival was the Major.

"Come, come, man! Do n't be grumpy. Let's have a civil chat," said Marley.

"All right; sit down," answered Philip, who felt that victors should be forgiving, and who was thinking to himself, "This man's heart must be torn by his loss, no doubt; while I possess the best woman in the world." He half pitied the other for losing such a treasure.

The Major, at best, was a fretful, unamiable mortal, and, face to face with one whom he envied, seemed more unmanly than usual.

"Ellis," he said slowly, "you hate me."

"No," replied Philip; "I can't say that. I want no dealings with you; but I do n't hate you. Do not cross me. There is room enough on earth for us both."

"Well, I hate you, with a perfect hatred," asserted the Major, with a vindictive light in his eye. "You have treated me like dirt; but there will be a reckoning," and his hardened features were overspread with a cruel leer.

Thoughts of the radiant household mate he had won softened Ellis, and he replied, calmly:

"That mood will do you no good, Marley. Hatred is folly; it impoverishes the soul. Love enriches it like a feast."

"You feel rich, then!" exclaimed Marley, with a laugh that had no music in it. "Your spirits are high."

"Higher than a cat's back; and Cræsus had only a handful of shimplasters, compared with me," answered Ellis, laughing with the wine of the strong joy that filled him.

"How long will your opulence last?" asked the older man."

"'Forever and a day,' and then some," said Philip.

The Major's face was a sorrowful study. Ignoble passion was glassed there, together with implacable enmity. He was what is often termed an ill-natured man—a man who could let a grudge eat in him, until his heart turned to punk, and harbor envy in unlaced excess. He was censorious, cynical, toward every one, and the root of it all was rank egotism, fly-blown self-conceit. One such has rhymed:

"The sunbeams clasp the earth,  
The moonbeams kiss the sea;  
But what are all these kisses worth,  
If thou kiss not me?"

If this man loses, none must win; if his mine pinches, none must produce ore; if his book falls still-born, none must sell; if his love proves false, none can be true; if his kisses fail, no lips must be uplifted. In his talk, the personal pronoun "I" is as prominent as the flagpole in the plaza of a rural town, and repeated monotonously as the palings on a picket-fence.

The two men were silent for a moment; then Ellis asked: "Why do you threaten me, Marley? The woman was fairly won."

"Beware! she is not yours yet, Ellis. 'There's many a slip'—you know the trite adage," replied Marley.

Philip broke into a hearty laugh, and then hummed softly Leigh Hunt's ballad—

"The lark is so brimful of music and love,  
With the green fields below, and the blue skies above,  
That he sings, and he sings, and forever sings he,  
I love my love, and my love loves me."

Then he rose, saying: "Comrade, I sympathize with you; I do, truly. Had I lost Edith, after loving her, I had rather never been born; yet, if this had befallen me, I would have tried to bear it manfully, without whining and malice. It is sorrow that brings out a man's true mettle. Come here a moment, if you please."

Marley, with an evil smile, followed him to the edge of the stream. There, Philip pulled out by the roots a small plant, which had a bright, gold blossom and dull leaves. Stooping, he pressed the strange growth under the water; and behold! all the leaves turned to silver. Stem and vein, and laminated foliage flashed polished argent of rarest beauty. So fairylike was the tracery, so dainty the filigree, that both of the men looked on admiringly, until Ellis withdrew it, when all its splendor faded, and it was again a plain, coarse weed.

"When the waves of adversity go over the soul," said the Captain, "they bring out its secret beauty, if it be sincere and noble."

"O, do they?" exclaimed the Major. "Then I shall see how you shine in the deep waters," and he drew a paper from his pocket, asking suavely, "Do you really think that Edith loves you?"

"Beyond a doubt!"

"And you love her?"

"No man ever spun silence into speech that would carry my love for her!"

"Well, here is a note addressed to her, which I found in the house not long ago." And the Major was smiling sneeringly.

"Well?" ejaculated Philip.

"It asks for an appointment, at midnight, in the arbor beyond the house."

"Go on."

"Well, at midnight, I was near the place, and saw Edith leave the house, closely wrapped, and meet a man, who came up the road from the city." The hideous smile broadened on the Major's face.

"Let me see the note," said Ellis.

"Here it is," and the older man handed it over with alacrity.

Full of unbelief, Philip read the following words:

"EDITH,—Please meet me, at midnight next Wednesday, in the arbor. I must see you.

"HAROLD."

Ellis was slightly disconcerted, for Marley seemed to be telling the truth; but he asked, quietly, "Do you expect me to believe this yarn?"

"No, sir," retorted his rival; "I desire you to go to Edith Satterlee, and ask if this is true. Show her the note, and let her deny that she received it, and kept a tryst, as I have told. If she contradicts me, I will give you any satisfaction that one man can give another."

"I go, Marley," said Ellis, shaking his finger threateningly; "and woe be to you if this slander

has crawled out of your venomous mind; you shall rue it bitterly!"

Ellis turned and walked away in the direction of the Satterlee home. His whole sky had grown dark; and yet he could not believe that Edith was untrue. He recalled the conversation in which she had denied encouraging the Major. Surely, she could not seem so innocent, and still be deceitful. He kicked the pumpkins savagely as he threaded the rustling cornfield, and fired a harmless shot at a crow, which cawed mockingly at him from a tree.

After an hour, he reached home, and found Edith sitting alone in the arbor. She greeted him smilingly, and he thought, "Can such a serene face, saddened by the loss of her father, be a cover for guile?"

He drew the note from his pocket, and laid it on her lap, saying, "Look at that, darling, and tell me if you have ever seen it before."

As she opened it, her face blanched, and the sheet shook in her hand like an aspen leaf.

"Is it yours?" he asked.

"Yes, it is mine," she answered, almost inaudibly.

"Did you duly receive it some weeks ago?"

"I did."

"Did you meet a man, unknown to me, at midnight in this place?" he went on, relentlessly.

A strange, hunted expression of entreaty came over her face, as she said, in a dry whisper, "Yes."

Ellis did not see the struggle going on within her as she gave that answer. He little knew why

she made no attempt to explain. His fiery blood was up: "Was she two-faced—was she a beautiful lie?" So it seemed. Jealousy leaped in him, and Edith, reading the terrible look on his face, said not a word. Slowly she drew her engagement ring from her finger, and gave it to him. He flung it on the earth, and crushed it with his heel. His resentment shook him with volcanic ire, and he cried, his voice withering in its indignation: "I have poured out my heart's libation on a double-dealing jade! O Edith! may you never know my anguish! Farewell!" and he turned and walked quickly toward the house.

While he was speaking, Edith sat speechless in an ague of dread. Never had she seen him thus. But when he was hidden by the shrubbery she realized what he had meant, and she knew that he was going from her—going forever, and she dared not tell him the truth.

Her beautiful face was contorted with suffering, as she buried it in her arms, and sobbed out her grief on the rough table of the summer-house. She heard the carriage driving down the avenue, and away toward the city, and she knew, without looking, that Philip was gone. Gone!—the word rang in her ears again and again. And she was powerless to call him back!

Philip had packed up his belongings, driven to the nearest railway station, and boarded a train for the city. From there he went to New York, and soon after to Chicago, which was then attracting young men as the coming city of the great West.

## CHAPTER XV

### Sinner McLaw Speaks

SINNER McLAW sat in his chair before the crackling wood fire in his house. He heard the oozing sap hissing sibilant protest to the roaring of the fitful gust clamoring at the casement. He was gazing into the flickering flame, waiting the arrival of Dr. Deynell, who had business relations with him, though he was too canny to risk much with such an eel-like customer. As the blaze flared up, it showed the smooth-shaven features of a shrewd, calculating face, full of asperity and mirthless penetration. The outline was long, the temples sunken, the eyes of steel blue, which could flash like swordblades; the lips thin and tense, the hair light brown and scanty. Usually, the mouth was closely set, and two horizontal wrinkles crossed his projecting forehead. His baptismal name was Ezra, but all the country side called him by the nickname, "Sinner." He knew this fact, and gloried in it, often repeating it to himself. There were but two things in the world he loved—his daughter and his money. Rumor had it that he cared nothing for the esteem of his neighbors, but was legally honest, in his beetle-headed fashion. The current creed concerning him, was that he suckled snow for mother's milk, and his heart



was a mere anatomical organ, necessary to his covetous life.

His aptitude for accumulating wealth amounted to positive genius, and no dollar ever passed him in either direction. To gather dimes, and hoard them, was his passion; but he was farseeing and bold in business ventures. An abler farmer never turned a furrow, and bank-notes seemed to fly to him like doves to their windows.

The luxury of doing good he seemingly never knew, except by proxy, through Laura. "I reckon this community will take a day off to celebrate when I die," he used to say, laughing incontinently. "But I'm not going to flit yet for quite awhile. I mean to live as long as I see any one else living."

This thrall to Mammon had been put in social quarantine by all his right-thinking neighbors, but he cared nothing for their snubs. All ironical remarks glanced harmless from the hide of this moral pachyderm. With a metallic face he turned aside every appeal to his better self. He could make his dinner by meditating on his possessions; yet he never adulterated the truth in a business transaction.

Blessed is the man who knows how to be rich! It is a high art. Wealth, like water, must be mastered, or it is murderous. Nothing more graceful than a swimmer, or less graceful than a drowner. One is upborne by his wealth, the other is whelmed.

The Nazarene said to the rich young ruler, "Go, sell all;" to the rich centurion, "I have not seen such faith in Israel." One hoarded his opu-

lence, the other radiated it. A grievous curse is selfish riches, either of the wallet or the brain.

When Burns, the intellectual Cræsus, came to an inn by day, the farmers left the plow midfield, to hear him talk. At midnight on his arrival the guests were awakened to listen to his mellifluous speech. Among scholars and statesmen his intellect was as a lamp among rushlights; yet Carlyle calls him "a steed of the sun hitched to an ale-wagon." His intellectual wealth pulled him into an early grave. Momentary opulence drags heavily on most. The elect few know how to use it to the cheer and comfort of many.

McLaw, with his instinct for heaping up riches, apparently had not learned the boundless power of money in doing good. Such men unwittingly create class hatred, and endanger the social order.

As Deynell came in, he said, "How are you today, Mr. McLaw?" He purred smoothly, laying aside his glossy hat.

"Tolerable," grunted the farmer, nippingly.

Deynell was, in everything, antipodal to McLaw. The width of the sky separated their minds. He cared nothing for money, save as it became the escutcheon of his egoism, but drank deep and scattered wide. The finest carriage drawn by mettled horses, the costliest imported wines, the highest-priced clothing, silk hosiery, and Paris ties, met his extravagant desires.

The herdsman usually wore a scrubby beard on his murky face, and his cheap clothes were ever in shabby disrepair. His rule was, "Let the other fellow do the talking."

The medico patronized the barber every morning, and was sleek as a seal and altogether elegant in appearance, genial, and seemingly straightforward in his speech. His undeniable talents would have won success in any honest business; but his o'ervaulting ambition could not tarry for fair methods.

Knowing that McLaw was a leading stockholder in a city bank, he had inveigled him by fanciful promises and occasional payments of usurious interest to put money into his chain of hospitals in various cities. The physician was a fearless financier, and loved to take great risks, enjoyed walking on the edge of the precipice. He was known to give cheques on banks in the West, where he had no funds, and wire money next day to meet the cheque, which went by mail, and keep loans in the air by his cool assurance in borrowing from Peter to pay Paul.

"We are all right, now," he said, crossing his legs in his inept neighborliness. "I have seven institutions, and they all report weekly to the one in the city."

"Making money, eh?" said the flock-master.

"Hand over fist," purred the leech. "Here are the reports for last week from each one, with cheque for receipts appended. Look them over."

The returns for the week were enormous, and the granger's eyes glinted. He did not know that the arch plotter had sent to each branch money he had borrowed in the central city from McLaw's bank, to be duly returned as local receipts for the week.

The farmer had thousands loaned him, and accordingly felicitated himself on the fine showing; but his laugh sounded like walnuts rolling over an attic floor—so little hilarity or comradery was in it.

"Here is the interest on that first loan you made me, Ezra—twelve per cent. Thirty-two hundred dollars."

McLaw put the cheque in his pocket, and Deynell said, with an ingenuous grin that seemed dissociated with any sinister purport, "How is Ronan coming on now?"

The agriculturalist had noted the infatuation of his daughter, but was, as always, slow-spoken and non-committal. The answer was pumped out drawlingly, word by word:

"Fairly well, I think. He is a strong preacher. The people appear to like him."

The doctor had told McLaw about Beverly's prison-life; and the ruralist was sore puzzled about his duty to his child; but he said nothing to his guest.

After some desultory talk, the leader of the Cave Hill brigands went out, saying, with a pretense of heartiness: "Good-bye, Mr. McLaw; our association in business will be profitable for us both."

That evening Ronan called, and "Sinner" greeted him cordially. "Have a seat and stay awhile, parson."

"Thank you, I will. I want to talk with you, Mr. McLaw."

"Jog along with it, then, and put your words close together."

"Well," said the pastor, "I have had a wretched experience to-day. I was called to see a little boy who is near to death. He is a member of our Sunday-school, and wanted to talk with me, in his simple way. The father was bitter, and the mother heartbroken. It is a black story, theirs."

"What is it?" asked Ezra.

"When the smallpox broke out," said Ronan, "the Millbank village authorities ordered every one who had not been vaccinated to submit to it. Some of the people protested, but were forced to obey the law."

"It is a good law," remarked the taciturn tiller of the glebe.

"The law is fair enough," continued the pastor; "but no care was taken in securing the vaccine matter for inoculating the poor people. When this lad was treated, his arm swelled and became twice its normal size. He suffered great pain, and his whole physical nature changed."

"It is too bad," said the old man. "Too bad! Doctors should be careful."

"When I stood by the bed," resumed Beverly, "the mother sobbed and the father raved, the child looking at me piteously out of his hollow eyes. 'T is murder, black murder!' said the man. 'See me little Jimmie, lyin' there, slaughtered! Poor darling!' I tried to quiet the parent, but he screamed out: 'The law, is it?' The law comes and poisons me only child, fills his baby veins with filth from some human beast! An' now he's dying, and his mother heartbroken the day.' In vain I endeavored to calm him. 'Curse the law! Blast

it! It is made for the rich! A poor man has no right to live. Curses double-dyed and hell-deep fall on it an' all the damnable wrong of it! I would like to throttle the law, that I would!' 'Mr. Wylie,' I pleaded, 'do n't rave so.' 'I ain't ravin', parson; me heart's burstin'. I would rather I was dead this day. They came into me little house an' stuck the devilish knife in his arm, and from that hour he faded. You know how bonnie he was. Look at him now! Had they put the blade into his innocent heart, it had been kinder for them. Then we would have a sweet corpse to put away. But they killed him by inches, and left but a rotten skeleton for his mother and me.' And the agonized father fell on the floor and wailed like a lost spirit. The last word I heard, as I came out, was: 'O, if he'd only bin drowneded in the dam or crushed by the cogs in the mill, his flesh would be clean! Curse the black-hearted law! It is agin us!'"

The clergyman did not tell all the story. He could not do so without self-praise, and preferred to obey the Scriptural injunction, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." When the machinist, Wylie, hurled his half-insane imprecations at the law of the village, he was not only in deep anguish because of his child's death, but was suffering the depression of poverty through lack of work. On last pay-day his envelope, passed out through the office-window of the mill, contained nine dollars; and that was four weeks ago. The storekeeper, who usually allowed the employees a liberal credit, seeing no prospect

of payment, had refused to sell his goods on any but a cash basis, which was the only plan to save his financial bark from shipwreck. He well knew the hungry and shivering horde of operatives would take all he had, and pay nothing, because they had nothing to pay with. They were mostly honest, but were beset by hard circumstances.

The minister knew that there was not a dollar in the Wylie house, and that the family had lived for two weeks on potatoes and turnips which the good-natured farmers had allowed them to take for some labor given in gathering the crops.

Bitterer than the fiercest pang of gnawing hunger to this class is the odium of pauperism, and Wylie knew that his unfortunate and wronged son would have to be buried by the parish authorities in a grave in the potter's field. This Ronan resolved to avert, if possible. He knew that a direct offer of money would be spurned, as their need had not been mentioned. It is ever true that those who deserve help suffer in silence, while the less worthy fill, with their beseeching clamor, every gateway to possible assistance.

He saw, on the table, a copy of the "Essays of Elia," and, being a lover of the gentle humorist, resolved to purchase it. Opening the volume, which was an old English edition, he saw, on the fly-leaf, the name of the author—Charles Lamb—whether an autograph or not, he could not aver; but he determined to give the sufferer the benefit of the doubt, and secure it.

"Where did you get this book, Mr. Wylie?" he inquired.

"It belonged to my grandfather, and my father brought it over the sea from Lancashire when he kem to Ameriky," was the answer.

"Did he bring many books?" asked Ronan.

"No, sir. He was a poor man, but tried to have a few good books about him. He always said it was the easiest way to get into the best society."

"Do you care much for this one?"

"No, sir. I am sorry to say I read very little, and wife is too tuckered out and tired to read at all. More's the pity!"

"Will you sell this book to me?"

"No, sir; I'll not do that, but I'll give it to you. It is worth about twenty-five cents, I suppose, at the old dealers."

"You are much mistaken, Mr. Wylie. It has the name of dear old Charles Lamb in it, written long ago, probably by the author. I think it is an autograph copy, and has considerable commercial value. Lamb's autographs are scarce, and I want this one. Will you take twenty dollars for it?" Beverly asked.

"Twenty dollars, sir! Surely it is not worth half of that," said the millhand in astonishment.

"I think it is," retorted Ronan. "At any rate, I am willing to chance it. I call it a bargain at that price."

Wylie scanned the clergyman suspiciously. Was this man trying to give him charity indirectly? But Ronan's face was guileless and serene. In fact, he seemed to be rejoiced at the find, and was already in the first stage of the charming frenzy of a triumphant bibliomaniac. He was fondling



the volume and scanning the writing as if it made him heir to a dukedom, holding it out at arm's-length and chuckling quietly, as he murmured: "Sweet, old, stuttering optimist! How we all love you, Charles Lamb!"

"Of course," said the impoverished weaver, "if it is worth that to you, I'll take it. I will be only too glad if that old, battered book should prove such a prize."

Beverly smiled, as if saying, "How little you know!" and handed him twenty dollars. "Here is your money," he said.

Wylie took it with a great gladness; for it saved his child's corpse from the hated public plot in the cemetery, and would give him a befitting burial.

His voice trembled, as he asked, "Will you bring it back and get your money if it is not a real signature?"

"No, sir, never! I am no Indian buyer, to purchase to-day and rue to-morrow. I am quite sure it is authentic. At any rate, take a long look at it, Wylie; you will never see it again. It is mine;" and he hugged it to his breast as he went out.

When the dominie had told the tale, omitting his purchase of the book, McLaw sat moveless, and said, "It is an unusual case."

"Unusual only in its sickness, not in its poverty. A liking for daily bread is not unusual. And now," said Ronan, "I have a request to make. Since the plague closed the mills, the people are suffering. Winter is coming on, and they need food and clothing. You are rich, and your har-

vests are abundant. I want you to let me haul to them, in your wagon, to-morrow, enough potatoes, corn, turnips, and apples to supply the neediest families; and I want to say from you that they may go into your woods and cut fuel enough to keep them from freezing next winter. What do you say, Ezra? Say yes. Open your heart, and be a prince."

The farmer was shrinking into himself. In a minatory tone he retorted, emphatically: "No, sir. I can't do any such thing."

Ronan's soul flamed at the inhuman callousness in his inscrutable face, which seemed like a leather mask.

"Why not, Mr. McLaw?"

Well, I pay more taxes than any man in this township, and the poor get it when they apply for county aid, and for other reasons. If I begin this charity work, there is no end to it. I did not bring this people into the world or into destitution, and I am not responsible for their distress."

This long speech exhausted "Sinner," and the mettlesome Beverly broke out again:

"You have more than enough, and some to spare. Your land has fruitful crops, and you are now beyond all possibility of want."

"What I possess is mine," said McLaw, doggedly, in a slow, unmodulated voice. "What I have I'll hold. It is mine, to do as I will with it."

"Yours, sir?" Beverly was on his feet now, towering over the farmer wrathfully. "Yours? Where did you get these crops? Did you mix the

elements of the soil? Did you roll the cloud-wagons from the sea bearing the rains? Did you pucker up your mouth and blow the winds that rippled your wheat? Did you drive the blazing chariot of the sun up the sky every day to ripen it? Yours? You are a narrow, un—"

McLaw leaped up, foaming with rage. "Do you hector me in my own house, sir? Deynell says you are only a convict, not long out of the penitentiary. I'll thank you to know your place when addressing an honorable man who never wore a convict's stripes."

"I hector nobody," Ronan retorted, ignoring the charge; "but hark! Ezra, as sure as Nemesis treads the track of guilt, your craftiness shall not go unwhipped. If these people starve," he cried, raising his hand as if invoking judgment, "God will smite you, thou cinder of hu man slag!"

The farmer blanched, as if the words seared his eyeballs. "Leave this house!" he roared, "and never enter it again, you impudent jailbird! Go and kennel with the scrubby curs you love so well!"

Ronan forgot all reason and duty, as he straightened up, with the cry: "You heartless hellion! Take that!" His right fist shot into the face of McLaw, who went down like a log. Falling, he caught the table-cloth, and pulled it from its place, and the lamp crushed upon him. As a servant rushed in, Ronan took his hat, and passed out.

## CHAPTER XVI

### An Outlaw's Death

RONAN left "Sinner's" house greatly excited, and walked miles into the country to calm his ruffled emotions. A storm was coming over the western horizon's rim, growling and ominous. The first drops of the rain plashed on him as he reached his boarding-place. Brad Baldwin and his wife had gone to visit a married daughter in the city, and left the house to him for a few days. The tramp of the rain on the roof was like a hurrying host, and he sat down at the cottage organ in the parlor, and let his riotous feeling flow out through his fingers.

A listener would have learned that he was following the music of the outside tempest with his harmony. The lightning slashed its saber through the scudding clouds, slicing them into masses of inky ribbons, dyed with electric flame. The thunder growled among the hills; then suddenly burst in crashing anathemas that cowed the shuddering earth. The sodden elms mopped the roof, and the choked eave-troughs ran cataracts at every angle of the square building. With no light but the lurid flashes of the levin, he poured his soul

through the reeds of the instrument, ceasing not till the rain ceased.

A knock was heard at the door, which he wonderingly opened. Laura McLaw, wrapped in a waterproof cloak, entered, and said:

"Do n't be alarmed. I am out at midnight because I know all about your quarrel with my father."

"What brings you here, Laura?"

"To tell you that you must leave Millbank."

"I know that well enough. I have no desire to stay in this Church now."

"Father is badly bruised by your blow, and declares you must go at once."

"I will depart speedily, if you will go with me."

"I will go to any land with you, Beverly."

"Then make ready, and we will fly together. How much time do you need to make preparation?"

"Only one day, darling. To-morrow night I can go."

"Very well. Meet me at the blue gate near your father's barn at midnight. Be prompt, my love, and we will soon be far from trouble."

Her fathomless eyes outshone the jewels at her throat, and he saw the adventure was greatly to her liking. Eagerly she said:

"I have some money of my own. Shall I take it with me?"

"Yes, we may need it till I find work to support us."

"Good-bye. I will be there at the appointed time. Only one day to wait. Then we will have

each other and all the world before us." He kissed her ardently, then watched her go into the outer dark.

As he sat, an hour later, brooding on the past, he heard the thud of galloping hoofs coming up the street, splashing through the mire. They halted at his house, and he opened the door. He saw a rider with a led horse.

The man dismounted and came in. "Are you the parson?" he asked.

"I am."

"Well, I'm in trouble, and I want your help."

"State your desire."

"I want you to visit a man who is dying. He has been shot in a fight, and will not last till morning. Who do you think I am?" he asked.

"I do n't know. I never saw you before," replied the parson.

"Well, I am a crook, same as the crippled one. We belong to a band of shovers. The dying man is my brother. We were raised right, and he wants your help; says he do n't want to die in his sins. Can you help him? Please do so, if you can."

"Perhaps, if he is truly penitent, I may."

"Will you promise not to say anything of what you saw to any one?"

"You want my professional services under vow of secrecy. Is that it?"

"That's it exactly. Your words just slide into place like they was greased."

Beverly pondered his duty. The thought of a godless mortal going unhelped to the judgment bar decided the question.

"I will go," he said.

"And you will never betray us?"

"You have my word, sir."

"All O. K. I can trust you. Come out and mount a horse which I have for you. Have no fear."

They were soon mounted and loping rapidly over the plashy road toward the Cave Hills. Reaching Hull's shanty, they got off, and the guide, taking the Negro's lantern, ordered him to return the horses at once to their place. Then they went in the barn, through the stall into the cavern, and, walking rapidly, gained the camp of the counterfeiters.

In a recess at the side Beverly saw the wounded man. He was but a youth, and undoubtedly mortally hurt.

"This is little Sid, Reverend," said his guide.

"Sid, here 's the minister you wanted to see."

The suffered looked up; and Ronan said, "Do you know me, my man?"

"Yes, sir," he replied, huskily.

His brother broke in with: "He heerd you wunst down to the church, and allus liked you, parson."

Beverly knelt by the helpless one, and asked him: "How do you feel about your condition? I want your honest opinion. Do you think you will recover?"

"No, sir; I'm a goner. No hope for me."

"Then I want all to go away but your brother," and, turning to the others, he said, "Leave us, please."

They all withdrew.

"Now open your heart, Sidney. Tell me all you feel and desire," said Ronan.

"Well, sir, I do n't want to die this way. Everything seems so dark."

"You have lived a wicked life—" then, addressing his brother, "How was he hurt?"

"He got into a row with one of the gang. They were both half crazy with liquor, and he was shot. The man who did it got off and ran away."

After a long talk with the sufferer, in which he recalled his youthful training and fixed his thoughts on the central idea of the gospel, the youth said, "I wish you would sing for me."

"Very well, I will gladly do it."

Calling the men, he asked if any could sing. One or two could; but they knew no hymns. Asking them to be seated near by, Ronan prepared to sing. Thinking how he had felled McLaw, he sought a song that would express his own weakness. He felt guilty almost as they were, and, all the circumstances considered, they were on one moral level; for none of them had his inward illumination.

The sight was strangely impressive—the fire-light flickering on the pallid face, and lighting up the countenances of the outlaws, all deeply solemnized by the approach of the death-angel. Tears were flowing down the cheeks of the brother. In the silence the drops from the roof fell splashing, with tinkling sound upon the stalagmite columns which they were patiently building up in the darkness.



The stillness was broken when Ronan, in his clear, rich tenor, started the first strain of the noble lyric that has lifted millions to higher lives: "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom."

Like a blown bubble of perfect melody, round and pure, the initial note floated away to the far-sprung dome, and, dashing against it, broke into a shower of echoes as sweet as the sound of silver hammers falling on silver anvils. Descending, these broken chords met the ascending tones, and clashed like golden cymbals, till all the upper air was filled with a storm of swirling harmonies. It seemed that God had saved, in his happy heaven, from remote eternity, every note that ever fell from lute or shawm, harp or dulcimer; that his angels had swept them from the crystal pavement into some celestial treasury, and, at the signal of that first strain, had spilled them upon the listeners in one resistless cataract of choral symphony. From pendulous column and precipitous crag, a shining choir seemed answering strophe to strophe, line to line, as he sang:

"So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
Will lead me on;  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
The night is gone.  
And with the morn those angel faces smile,  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

The dying man put out his hand and clung to Ronan's palm; and at the words, "Hold thou thy cross before my fading eyes," the men burst into sobbing all around him.

When he ceased, the song swept on above them, ringing faintly in remote alcoves and distant halls, till the expiring cadence, like a white dove, fluttered across the chaotic darkness, and was gone.

"Men," said the preacher, slowly, "every one of you must kneel while I pray; and do you pray with me."

Holding little Sid's fluttering hand in both of his, he prayed as he had never prayed, and when he ceased the boy whispered: "Please stay with me till I go. It will help me so much, and it won't be long. No one here can aid me. You can comfort me so much if you tarry till I am gone."

"Very well," said the pastor; "I will stay."

It was morning in the outer world before Sid's spirit took its flight. Before he passed away, he said, longingly:

"You will bury me, won't you, sir? I want a decent funeral, even if I was so bad. You will do this for me, won't you?"

"Yes," said Ronan.

When all was over, the brother said to him:

"You can't go home to-day. You might be noticed going or coming. We only pass out and in at night. So spend the day here, and conduct the funeral in the glen outside after nightfall."

"I will do so," said Beverly; "but I must be home before twelve o'clock."

"All right, sir. We will get you there before that hour."

## CHAPTER XVII

### A Soul's Struggle

**S**EEING that the preacher was a man to be trusted, and knowing that he had pledged his word to reveal nothing he learned in his professional capacity, the counterfeiters made no effort to hide anything from him.

One of them, called Operator No. 1, who was none other than Moulton—a deep rogue, who would meddle in any business that had gain in it and could be kept under the surface, and who had led the ghouls the night Colonel Satterlee was assailed—showed him into various portions of the cavern, which stretched for miles, and allowed him to look at the press, examine the several plates, and even handle the crisp bills ready to be sent out and distributed to the felonious agents throughout the country. Carboys of chemicals stood about. Cans of various-colored inks, bottles of acid, and packages of fibrous paper were in reach. All the essentials for fine printing were in evidence; and the clergyman was amazed at the completeness of the outfit for corrupt work. Plainly a master mind was in charge of the obnoxious gentry.

He tried to stir up virtue in the breasts of the reprobates; but they sullenly refused to talk of their infamous traffic, and seemed dead to all appeals to their integrity.

To pass the hours, he borrowed a torch, and wandered some distance through the sepulchral arches, collecting queer quartz-crystals, large mica-flakes, bits of glittering spar, and in studying the peculiar formation of blue-and-white limestone and the wide variety of subterranean shapes seen in the curved stalactites. He kept within sight of the glimmer of the fire in the workroom, however, as he had been warned not to stray far away lest he should be lost.

About the time the bandit called at Ronan's house, after the rain, Dr. Deynell was making his way through the thick darkness on foot toward the haunt of the culprits. He was the chief operator, the head and front of the whole criminal conspiracy, the main stem of its wide ramifications; and his brain was the busy plexus where the wide network of unpropitious threads met.

His active brain had organized and his bold spirit had carried it to the present stage of operations. On the edge of the hill country the path wound around a clearing where several Negro families lived in a huddle of shanties. As the physician hastened through the wet underbrush by the well-known trail, he found that the storm had torn a huge limb from a tall tree, and thrown it across the path. Groping around its leafy top, he went thirty feet from his usual track, and, in the darkness, slipped into one of the numerous sink-holes by which the surface drainage ran into the cavern that honey-combed the underlying strata. As he fell, he caught at a bush which grew on the side of the pit, but it came out by the roots, and the

man tumbled headlong more than one hundred feet into the cavern below. By good fortune, as it seemed, a Negress, whose child had died of smallpox the day before, had, after the hurried burial, thrown all the infected bedding and straw of the old mattress into this shaft, to get rid of it. This alone saved the doctor's life; for he descended upon it with a heavy crash, and lay stunned and bleeding for a long time.

Regaining consciousness after some hours, he saw a feeble light overhead, and knew what had happened. He was faint with loss of blood and nervously unraveled by the shock, but pluckily resolved to make an effort to save his life. He knew he was in the cavern, but did not know his location. He had a few matches in his vest and his silver flask in his coat-pocket. He poured a little of the liquor on his handkerchief, after taking a sip to strengthen him, and lit it with one of his precious matches. The alcohol flamed up and beat the blackness away, so that he caught the outline of the chamber, which he recognized.

He was a mile from the workroom in a direction seldom traveled. "I can never creep that distance," he sighed. "I shall perish from exhaustion. I am growing weaker every moment."

He was in a pitiable condition and liable to collapse entirely. Creeping away from the discarded straw, he tried to find an exit that led by a short cut through Bat Hall to the rendezvous. He knew it was less than a quarter of a mile away; but at that season of the year the bats were in their silent house, and no one dared to venture

there; for their myriad wings, when aroused by a torch, quenched the light in their blind flight, and beat back the bravest invader of their domain.

Another match was used to kindle some of the driest straw pulled from the center of the heap, and, as it burned, he marked the portal, and crawled to it. His heart sickened as he saw, within the gloomy vault, the hideous creatures clinging to the walls and pillars, coating everything with a furry mantle of grisly horror. It was his only chance, and he grimly resolved to make a last effort to escape and find succor. Painfully he removed his coat, and slowly soaked it with the rum; then, with fast-ebbing energy, he lighted one edge of it, and staggered into the inferno. Half-blinded, he ran in the right direction; but his blazing besom swept the pendulous clots of bats from the low roof, and the Tartarean shower fell in gruesome clouds upon him. Madly plucking them from hair and beard, he flung the harpies, squeaking, from him, only to step on their gibbering bodies and slip in their slime again and again. Onward wildly he pressed toward the opposite door, dimly seen as he swung his flaming meteor around him; but the garish light brought the hairy, misshaped tenants of the underworld in troops upon him. In frenzy they buffeted him, but he lunged insanely forward through the Dantean tempest. His strange lamp had burned to a remnant, and, reeling in despair, he cast it, smoking, at his feet, put up both his hands impotently against the winged whirlwind beating against him, gave a long, piercing cry for help, and fell to the floor in a swoon,

overwhelmed, body, soul, and spirit, by the rush of that Hadean avalanche.

As he lay there in the sunless realm, the leathern vans of the loathsome birds fluttered upon him while he made convulsive efforts to brush them from his bleeding face; but at every spasm his uncanny foes returned to the attack, and the last throe left him lying helpless under the vampire pall.

Ronan, sitting not far from the outer gateway of the place, heard the cry, and, turning, saw a person waving a lurid signal, beset by his hateful enemies. He was about to rush into the chamber, when he discerned the face of the despairing man.

It was Deynell!—the relentless enemy, who had cast him into prison by lies, befouled his ministry with slander, smirched his name, and wrecked his life.

"It is justice, at last," he muttered, triumph leaping within him. He thought of his ruined career, his mother's anguish, his father's shame. "Righteous punishment has overtaken the wretch. Let him die befouled, unannaled, unkenneled." And he turned away to walk toward the camp-fire. Then came a text to his mind, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

He tried to stifle his conscience, which was ringing alarm-bells within his breast. "I had no hand in his death," he mused, half articulately, as if answering some unseen accuser. Then he turned and walked back to the grim chamber's entrance. All was still as the grave. In that dread cell his malignant pursuer lay, sullied, van-

quished. A seismic upheaval shook the foundations of his soul. "Forgive, as you would be forgiven," pleaded the good angel in his bosom.

"Let him die alone in that chill mausoleum. Let him die," argued the rampant demon of revenge. "Let him die, I say."

The man set down his torch upon a rock, and stood struggling with conflicting emotions. Like a tree in a gale, his spirit bent and rose, and bowed again. He was torn by contending forces. A volcano thundered in the depths of his soul. He was caught between two seas, and nigh to shipwreck on the jagged reef where many a strong vessel has gone down.

Suddenly a radiant vision shined before him of One who prayed, "Father, forgive them." He shot both clenched hands into the air as one who flings a beast from him, caught up his lamp, and sped swiftly into the room. Kneeling beside the stirless Deynell, he swept the crawling creatures from the doctor's blood-stained countenance with his hands, and, lifting him like a child, bore him rapidly to the workroom, and then loudly called the men. They ministered as best they could to the chief, as they called him; and the giant Negro carried him to the outer house.

Long before he recovered from the shock, smallpox from the polluted bedding seized him, and the fever lay heavy upon him day and night.

After this incident, Beverly sat all day in thought, and at ten o'clock of the night led a ghostly funeral in the glen near by, where the remains of hapless little "Sid" were laid to rest.



The brother had him home at eleven o'clock, and at twelve he stood near the blue gate to Mc-Law's residence, waiting for Laura. She came on the moment, eager for the flight.

He said: "Laura, let me speak before we go. Have you pondered this step? Do you know it is irrevocable?"

"I do; I know the price, and I willingly pay it," she replied. "Since you rescued me from a watery grave, I have been yours, wholly yours."

"Remember," he returned, "I am a penniless man, with a blasted career."

"Hush!" she retorted. "I have enough for awhile. You little know what a woman can do for the man she loves. She can walk through flames, as if they were but lilled brooks."

"Listen, Laura. Your devotion shames me. I am not worthy of it. This day I have had a look into eternity, and I must henceforth do right. You would hate me some day for this."

"Why do you hesitate?" she queried, impatiently.

"I do not hesitate. I have hesitated and wavered too long. We must part."

"Part!" she gasped. "Why, Beverly?"

"Because I find in my heart my first love. It is unquenchable. This day has shown me the stern face of Duty. I have lifted her veil. Henceforth, I will be remorselessly true. I can not give you the undivided affection you offer me. So our paths must diverge, never to cross again."

She leaned against the gate for support, saying, "You despise me, then?"

"No, Laura. I, alone, am to blame. You were free; I was not. I have been unmanly and base; but it began when I was ill, and mastered me."

"You will leave me, Beverly; leave me here alone?"

"At once, and forever! Return to the house, comfort your father—with all his faults, he is better than I. Hate me for the present; call me faithless, fickle, mean. I care little how the storm beats on me now—I have peace within. Some day, Laura, you will know my struggle to save myself and you, and then you will say, 'He was not all bad;' but I will not hear you—I will be far away."

"Mr. Ronan, I can not go back now. How can I live without you? I would prefer death to separation; you must not ask me to do this! I have counted all the cost, and will go to the earth's edge with you. Without you, life is not worth having!"

As he looked at her expectant face, mantled with the warm blood of her Mediterranean forefathers, his heart throbbed with mingled joy and sorrow. Joy, that he had his firm hand on the curb of his own reckless passion; sorrow, ineffable sorrow, for the woman standing there, with the starlight on the heavy braids of her glossy hair, and the bunch of pansies quivering with the battle raging in her breast.

"It must be. This is my irrevocable decision," he answered. "I am unfit to hold the happiness of any woman in my hands. I am unstable as water."

"Let us not part, Beverly. My father will forgive you if I ask him to do so. You can stay here. I will take up your work, and I will share my for-

tune with you. No one knows of the quarrel last night; you can continue here, and I will help you to attain to the eminence you deserve."

It was the critical hour of his life. On the peak he stood, both oceans before him. For a moment he vacillated. He was only a man, trying to be strong, but struggling with the brute inheritance that clogs even the best of mortals. He thought of the penniless lass who had turned from him in disdain; and of this radiantly superb creature, with wealth in her hands, waiting to go with him up the highway of fame. It was but an instant, and the recoil was sharp. He knew the victory was won—the seven devils were cast out, screaming, the door barred.

"No, no, Laura," he said; "I will not let you wrong yourself—it is madness. From this hour you shall know no more of me. Farewell!"

He opened the gate, to let her pass in. She walked homeward with set face, and eyes gazing into vacancy, like one in a dream. He went rapidly home, and early next morning went, with his belongings, to the train. Stopping at the post-office for the last time, to order his mail forwarded to a bookstore in New York, the postmaster handed him a letter, which had just arrived, and which he read on the train speeding eastward. It was from his old friend, the chaplain of the prison at R—, and ran thus:

"MY DEAR RONAN,—You requested me, when you left here, to notify you when old Hahn, the consumptive burglar whom you used to talk with,

came to the end of life. This is to say, he died last week, and I buried him in the little prison cemetery on the hill. He often spoke of you, and wished he could meet you once more. He said you had helped him very much. We are glad to hear of your continued success. Write soon.

"Yours fraternally,

"E. C. HANNING."

On reaching the hotel in New York, he opened his trunk, as soon as it was brought to his room, and from the bottom took out a package of letters. The one handed him by Hahn was broken open, and he read these words:

"DEAR FRIEND RONAN,—It is very little I can do to show my gratitude for all you have done for me. Had I met you early in life, I would not now be the friendless wreck I am. Perhaps I can help you a little to uplift other unfortunates.

"After I am dead, which will be soon, for I am going fast—the old outlaw is nearing the cutoff now—you must go, at night, to Folly Island. I have heard you speak of Dellhurst. It is about twenty-four miles south of that town, and one mile above the city of P—. There is a big stone house there, now going to decay, and once there was a fine garden around it. On the extreme south end, where the sand begins, and the grass ends, you will find two willow trees, about ten feet apart.

"The place is probably overgrown with brambles now. Take two cords, each as long as the

distance between the trees, tie one to each trunk, extend them south, where the ends meeting form the point of a triangle, you must dig three feet deep, and take what you find. Have no compunctions about using the money, as the rightful owner is dead long ago; he gained it legally, but cruelly, and it did him no good. You can never find any owner, and I want you to take it as your own, and use it to help suffering humanity.

"Thanking you for all you did for me, and wishing you long life and prosperity, I am,

"Your penitent friend,

"JOSEPH HAHN."

"What a curious letter this is! I will sleep on it, and decide what is best to do in the matter."

In the evening he strolled about the city. A familiar hymn, floating from a mission, led his steps within.

Here he studied the scene closely, and watched the earnest men and women instructing the seekers and cheering the hopeless. It was a piteous place—the rum-sodden faces, the premature decrepitude, the blood-shot eyes, the hoarse voices, the limp forms, and sleazy raiment. The sight of it, sound of it, smell of it, was hateful to any one unbitten with enthusiasm of humanity.

He asked himself, "Why does that clean, lovely woman come here, night after night, to rescue these remnants of mortality?"

He would like to hear her answer; so he beckoned to her, and asked, "Why do you do this?"

"Well, sir," she replied, exultantly, "you think

I will say I do this for those debased creatures. You are mistaken—it is pure selfishness; I am doing this for myself. I have had it borne in on me that God has bound the human family in one bundle. One who thinks to enjoy himself alone, while others suffer, has missed the meaning of life. Only by serving others can one evolve herself; I call it the higher selfishness. This place is my opera, palm-garden, art-gallery, and library. Here I grow as I feed my own soul, and the wine of this feast makes all other vintages insipid. Taste and see! Go to that man yonder; he is deeply moved, and evidently has seen better days."

Ronan went to the corner where a battered, frouzy fellow sat, and said, "Would you like to talk on the topic that is uppermost here?"

"Yes, sir, I would. I want to live a better life; but I am bewildered by doubts."

Beverly talked his best for twenty minutes, and asked at last, "How do you feel now, my brother?"

"No better. I grow harder all the time. You do n't touch my trouble by a mile."

"Do you mean to say," queried Ronan, "that I have failed utterly?"

"That 's it, exactly."

"Well, sir, do you know, I expected to fail? In fact, I always fail at a job like this."

"You do?"

"Yes, I do; but I have a Friend who never fails."

The other one was unversed in the terminology of the Church, so he said, "Where is your friend? I would like to meet him."

"Would you?" whispered the preacher. "Then you may. He is here. Let us kneel in prayer."

A hush fell in the room as Ronan's voice rose. Strong, fervent, steady, it upbore the quaking soul of the profligate toward the altar of sacrifice. Remembering his own weakness and need of help, Ronan's hand slipped into the grimy palm of the outcast, and, forgetting all things else, he slowly, with streaming eyes and faltering step, led the prodigal home. Step by step, in the backward track from the far country, side by side, arm-in-arm, they came.

He remembered the woman evangelist's words, "Before you can get a sinner to God, you must first get him to you." His heart gripped the moaning penitent by his side. His soul stood up, and, amid the awful glory, tremblingly cried, "Lord, if thou hast not cast me off, give me this one!" And through his misty eyes he saw a glow break over the mourner's face, and felt the first surging leap of the new life, as he looked him, "How is it now?"

"All new!" cried he, leaping up. "How good is God! How wonderful, wonderful his love! Let me go and tell Jane!"

And away he shot, his face beaming.

The lady was at Ronan's side in a moment, asking, "Who got most out of that grapple?"

"I did," said Beverly, inwardly exalted.

"Pure selfishness, is n't it?" said she.

"Yes," he answered; "pure selfishness. Pure with the purity of the white-souled Galilean."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### The Criminals are Taken

WHEN Ellis reached the Garden City, as it was then called, he found a thriving, bustling town, brimful of energy, and overflowing with hope. 'housands were rushing in from the East, and from the countries of the Old World. The place was growing by leaps and bounds. Laborers and mechanics were erecting houses on every hand.

A few days convinced him that it would be a good spot to set his stakes and pitch his tent. He saw it was destined by Nature for a metropolis.

Here the prairie, the lusty son of the mountains, had wedded the lake, the laughing daughter of the seas. Their well-favored offspring was christened Chicago, and the typesetter felt that this child with the Indian name held all the future in fee. Already the whole sisterhood of cities gazed with wonder at her audacious courage, standing with one foot on the laughing lake and one on the level land; one hand on her freighted ships and one on her fruitful farms, taking toll from North and South, with steel highways bearing her largess to be distributed in every land; while tangled above her shapely head the wires



throbbed, electric with the intelligence of the whole earth! Queen of the inland seas; princess of the fertile plains! Showing the crudities of youth, the raw edges of adolescence, full of bounce and effervescence; but under all a wealth of sane judgment, a warmth of fearless optimism, destined to make for her a record without precedent or parallel in all the chronicles of our race!

Ellis secured a situation as night compositor on a morning paper, and had his home in a reputable boarding-house on the West Side. Some time after this an old bachelor book-keeper, who lodged on the same floor as he, came to him, saying, "Mr. Ellis, I want to ask a favor, in the name of common humanity."

"What is it?" asked Philip.

"There is, next to my room, a sick young man. He was boarding here when I came, a year past. A few days ago he was severely injured at a crossing, and is bleeding internally. The doctor says nothing can be done to save his life; but, of course, does not tell him that."

"A sad case, Mr. Phipps," said Ellis.

"He is nothing to me, one way or another; but I took a fancy to him. I know he has seen better days, and I tried to help him. When he was hurt our landlord wanted to send him at once to the City Hospital. He dreaded that place, and I offered to pay his room rent, and provide a physician, if he could be allowed to stay here. The head of the house consented, reluctantly; and I have been sleeping near him, giving him quieting medicines during the night. I must work each day, or lose

my position; but you are at home, sleeping, during the day. Would you be kind enough to go to his room, and give him the medicine three times each day? He won't be here long, and it is all we can do."

"Certainly," said the compositor. "I will go in and see him now."

The sufferer, whose name was Edward Halley, looked his gratitude when the plan was laid before him. The hired girls had neglected to give him the potion, and he had suffered greatly. He was wasted to a skeleton, and the seal of death was on him.

Two days later, when Phipps hurried home at night, and flew up the stairs, he found the room empty. Rushing back to the kitchen, he asked the landlady where Halley was. She informed him that the other boarders threatened to leave unless the sick man was removed, and, after Ellis went to his work in the evening, the ambulance had taken Halley to the hospital.

Phipps, who fancied the youth because he was, like himself, of English stock, from the same shire of Sussex, hastened, without supper, to the City Hospital, where he was refused admittance.

"You must come in visiting hours," said the doorkeeper. "Wednesdays and Fridays, from one to five in the afternoon."

It was Monday, and Phipps said, warmly, "My friend will be dead before Wednesday; can I not see him now?"

"No, sir; orders are imperative."

Dejectedly he went home; and on Wednesday

knocked off half a day. Philip cut his sleep short to go with him. They found Halley in a ward full of narrow beds. He was unconscious, and they could not rouse him; and they left him.

"When he dies, notify me," said the clerk. "I will take charge of his body."

Next day the summons came, and the remains, by Phipps's orders, were taken by an undertaker to his rooms. He had left a little money in his purse, and Phipps said, "Let us give the poor fellow a decent burial, Ellis."

"All right. I believe in that."

Next day, Ellis got a clergyman to come to the undertaker's rooms and read the burial service. Then the hearse bore Halley's corpse to a lot in a sightly place, and the two friends shoveled in the earth on his coffin.

"I could n't bear to put him in the potter's field, for he had fine qualities," said Phipps.

On returning to their rooms, Phipps looked over the few things the deceased had left, and said, "I wish I knew where to send this locket I took from his neck when he was laid out; but he never gave me the address of his kinfolks."

"I saw that hanging round his neck," said Philip, "when I was waiting on him. I suppose it contains a picture of his sweetheart." A sigh escaped from Ellis's lips with the word—sweetheart—and he gulped down a lump in his throat.

"No," said the other. "It is not his sweetheart; it is the face of his sister. The only friend he had, he used to say."

"Let me look at it, will you?"

Ellis took the locket, gazed at it a moment, and started in surprise. It was the face of Edith Satterlee. Forcing back his amazement, he said, "Did Halley tell you his history?"

"Part of it," said Phipps. "He was of a fine family, somewhere in the East. When quite young, he went wrong, under older rascals' tutoring. He forged a note for a large amount, and fled the country. His mother was dead, and his father, a stern man, cast him off utterly; but, secretly, his sister helped him. When in distress he sometimes visited her; but always under cover, and saw her only a few moments."

A light was breaking on Ellis. "Did he visit her recently?"

"Yes, sir; only a few days before he was cut down on the street."

Philip's heart was knocking loud. His conscience was tearing him. "Will you let me keep this, Mr. Phipps?"

"For the present, yes. If it is claimed, you will turn it over to whoever has a right to it."

Ellis hurried to his room, shaking with anguish. "O Edith, my darling! What cruel thing have I done? Stabbed you with my awful accusation, when you were trying to save your own flesh and blood. God forgive me! I am not fit to live!"

And the great soul of Philip Ellis flung him on the bed, where he writhed in unavailing remorse.

The next train flying toward Millbank bore Ellis; and it went all too slow for him. A man who could confess a wrong, he was aching to seek her pardon. Perhaps—perhaps, there might be

hope for him yet. If so, a life's atonement would be the price he would pay, and gladly.

When within two hundred miles of his destination, a man took the seat before him, and Philip noticed on his finger a silver ring, with green setting. Studying his face closely, he saw it was one of the precious four whom he had seen in the river mill when coming from the war. An hour later a man came into the car, and greeted the other warmly.

Ellis looked him over, while pretending to read, and recognized another of the malodorous quartet. "Going to their rendezvous for another batch of the 'queer,'" he thought. "I believe I will follow them, and mark their roost."

They got out at the city, and he lagged behind, when they took a coupé. Then he called a cab, and said: "Follow that carriage; but don't let them notice it. Stop when they stop."

Darkness was falling, and, as the conveyances sped, mile after mile, the night enveloped the earth. To his surprise, they went six miles, passed through Millbank by a road seldom traveled, and, on the edge of the Cave Hills, dismissed the vehicle. He did the same, unnoticed, and pushed into the woods after them.

When the pair reached Hull's house, they knocked, and the darkey came sneakingly out. He evidently knew them, and, with his lantern, led them into the barn. After awhile he came out, alone, and went into the house.

Ellis crept up through the vines, and looked into the stable. Only a sorry team of Gothic-

built horses were there. He entered, and searched carefully, and by pulling away the hay heaped against the side of the stall next the hill, saw that the boards were loose. He pushed them along, and looked into the cavern. All was Stygian gloom; but when his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he could trace the outlines of a room. On hands and knees he moved into the chamber, felt his way round the damp walls, which the oozing water had chiseled into fantastic shapes, and, moving part of a rock, saw a far-off, faint haze, as of light. Carefully he moved, softly as a cat, and the glow ripened as he pushed on. His scouting experience in the army stood him in good stead now, and, after a painful progress of twenty minutes, he peered between two stalagmites, and saw the counterfeiters by their fire, engaged in their iniquitous profession.

It was a picturesque spectacle. Eight of the gang were present, and all busily at work, some printing, some sorting, some packing the spurious currency. Over them a high dome leaped into the blackness, braced by the buttresses of the mighty hills. Hundreds of stalactites hung from the vault overhead, each with its pendant drop at the point, all gleaming like aerial diamonds. On the walls gypsum was spread in lustrous whiteness, flashing from its filigree facets a myriad glinting gems.

The dripping water and blowing wind of buried ages had scarped and hewn the massive walls into weird forms and grotesque shapes. Here was a chamber so spaciouly pillared, so

richly jeweled, so sublimely ceiled, that one could fancy himself at night, four thousand years ago, in some vast temple in Thebes by the storied Nile. A small rill lay like a silver riata upon the floor, and the voices of the workers were echoed by the groined roof far above.

While Philip gazed in wonder, he saw the figure of an old man coming from the shadows across the room. One of the men took a tin cup and lifted some water from a pool in the rill, which lay like a mirror embedded in the rocks. The aged man drank, and stepped after the other into the center, near a torch. Ellis gasped with astonishment, and caught at the column beside him. His mind reeled as the truth burned its way through his brain.

It was Colonel Satterlee, pale and weak. His blank face showed his mental impotence—unable to get a drink for his own needs. Staring fixedly at him, Philip confirmed his knowledge.

"Yes; it is he! Blessed be heaven! My friend alive, and near his home! I'll lose no time now."

Noiselessly he slipped out, and, when in the open night, under the stars, could scarce restrain a shout of triumph. Back to Millbank he sped, and wakened the constable, to tell his story. He had only one deputy who could be depended on in a fight.

"What will we do for help? We must have eight, at least; all are armed."

Ellis thought of the drovers at the "Red Horse Tavern." It was Saturday night, and there were fifteen lodged there. Out of bed they were called,

at twelve o'clock, and gathered around Ellis in the big room.

Quickly he related his tale, and the whole squad volunteered in a moment.

"Gee whillikers!" said one red-whiskered cattleman. "This is the very gang that has been filling the country with the 'fimsy' for the last four years. I want to help round 'em up! O! it will be better 'n sweet pertater pie to git 'em in a corner! Whoopee! hold me down!"

The officer of the law had three pairs of shackles, and ropes were secured for tying them.

"Do you think we have enough men to handle them?" he asked the Captain.

"More than plenty," said Ellis. "One good man can manage three canary-colored canines such as that crew is composed of."

Five of the most sinewy drovers were chosen, the farm-wagon driven out, and away they went, spoiling for the hunt. Halting half a mile away, in a neck of timber beside a swamp, the party pressed onward afoot. At two in the morning, they entered the stable, silently, and were moving, hand-in-hand, led by Ellis, along the wall. In ten minutes they were in the grotto behind the labyrinth of columns, and peeped out.

The unsuspecting knaves were toiling away. The Constable, knowing Ellis was a captain and had seen hard service, asked him to lead. The attackers were well armed, and all brave as grizzlies.

Philip whispered: "Get as near as you can, without noise. Have guns ready. When they dis-



cover us, rush on them. If they fight or run, shoot, and shoot to kill. Come on, men."

Swiftly the crouching band broke from the circle of dark, and sped toward the crew near the fire.

"Halt! Surrender! Hands up! Up!"

Six of the outlaws obeyed. One leaped at a drover, and got a glancing bullet on his scalp that knocked him senseless. One tried to run, but a pellet of lead bored into his thigh, and he fell, groaning, on the rocks. In a moment three were handcuffed, and soon the others were safely bound hand and foot. Ellis was prying around, looking for Satterlee. To the coward who ran, he said, "Where is the old man?"

"Over there, in the Catacombs," he whined.

The Captain ran in the direction indicated, bearing a torch torn from a niche, and soon saw, in a grim chamber, his friend lying on a bed of leaves. Tenderly he lifted him, and bore him to the light, and seated him on a rock.

"Colonel, do you know me?" he cried.

No recognition was in the warrior's face—his reason was dethroned.

The Captain's heart sank. But the work was not finished.

"Let four stay here and watch these whelps, while four of us go and get the nigger, Hull. He is in this mess bigger 'n a skinned hoss. Don't take any chances on letting these fellows get away; if they offer any resistance, shoot!"

In fifteen minutes the Constable, his deputy, Philip, and the red-whiskered drover, were around

the house—two at the front door, two at the rear. The Constable had warned them, saying: "Make sure of Lije, first thing. Be wary; he is big enough to throw a bull off a bridge."

Philip said: "I and this Westerner will take the front; you and your man the rear. When you hear our door go down, smash yours."

Soon they were ready. "Crash!" went the front door, as they threw themselves against it. Down went the other, and in an instant they filled the house. Hull and his wife were scared into fits. They fell on their knees, and abjectly begged for their lives. Soon the giant black was bound, and they heard Ellis cry, "Come here!"

In a shed bedroom, at one side, was a candle burning, and on a couch lay a sick man, raving with fever. Drawn skin, cracked lips, and glassy eyes told of his malady. Ellis took the candle, and gazed closer. The man's face was a mass of foul, black sores, covering his features like some grisly mask. An unmistakable odor was in the air.

"Smallpox!" said the Constable. "Come out, quick!"

But Philip said: "Come, look at him. Do you know who it is?"

The deputy stepped in, and shrank back.

"It is Dr. Deynell," he said. "Leave the wench here to care for him. We can't arrest him, though I believe he is the ringleader in this damnable business. Come. I wouldn't touch him with tongs forty feet long. The sheriff on the white horse will get him."

Soon the evildoers were loaded in the wagon, safely bound. The Constable drove the horses, and Ellis sat on the seat with Satterlee in his arms. The others marched close by. Dawn was breaking as they neared the tavern.

An early-risen farmer saw them passing, and asked what they had. One trader replied: "We've been hunting all night. Got eight 'possums and one 'coon."

When a messenger was dispatched, post-haste, to the city for a posse of police, and the "con-ackers" locked in the harness-room under guard, breakfast was eaten; and Ellis asked, "Have you a carriage here?"

"We have an old carryall."

"You know Colonel Satterlee's home?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am going there soon. One hour after I start, send the conveyance, with the Colonel and two good men, to his house. I will be there to receive him."

When the party left Hull's house, the negress, Suse, was told to attend to Deynell; but she was frightened, and said, "Er common houn' beast 'ud know bettah en ter stay in this conjured place." And as soon as they were gone she fled into the forest, and tried to get to the city to hide.

Just before daybreak, the delirious sufferer cried for help, and, half dazed, rose and left the house, staggering through the gloom. He was burning with fever, and the washing of the creek, overfull with the rains, drew him to its bank. He waded into the cold water, and tried to cool his

scaly hands. Crazy with consuming fire, he stumbled deeper into the muddy waters. Muttering incoherently, and tearing his blotched skin with his nails in his strong agony, he essayed to dip his face in the turbid torrent. Falling forward, he was swept, struggling, away. He was dead long before he went into the dam, and some Sunday fishermen found his dead body, floating in the intake, at noon.

## CHAPTER XIX

### The Colonel is Restored

MRS. REDMOND was a mellow Christian, who never liked to miss her Church service; and twice each Sunday, if the weather was fair, she was seen in her pew. She was a faithful, motherly soul, who had seen so many woes that a kind of emotional paralysis fell on her.

She often said: "I have lost all I had in the world. I have wept the fountain of tears dry. My heart is a broken cistern."

The Colonel's disappearance had only added another to her sorrows, and, after a day of numb helplessness, she had taken up her duties with fond alacrity, finding in her varied activities relief from the thoughts which bewildered her.

"I must go on and lead now," she thought. "Edith must be steadied, or I will be left alone." Her unselfishness was pleasant to see.

"You can spare me this morning, dear?"

"Yes, Aunt. I know how an hour of Church rests and renews you. I wish I could go, too."

When the elder lady went out, Edith, for the hundredth time, went over the details of her last scene with the Captain.

"I wonder where he is? O, if I could see him, and tell him all!"

She took down his picture, which showed him in military dress, gazed tenderly at it; then looked at the engagement ring on her finger, which he had so angrily trodden on.

"I suppose I ought not keep it," she thought; "but this poor bauble seems the last link that binds us together. He saved my father's life; I can remember him for that, and forget his cruel accusations."

The Church bells rang sweetly across the autumn fields, and she recalled their Sunday walks, hand in hand. So happy then, so miserable now; all in a few short weeks. Life seemed a failure to her. A strain of Mendelssohn's musical lamentation floated in her mind, "O for the wings of a dove!"

She craved surcease of trouble; she was overborne. The old, old problem emerged again: Why was such a good man as her sire taken away, while wicked men are at rest in their homes? Why is the orange-tree, that perfumes all the winds, felled, while the upas-tree, polluting the air, fattens and thrives unchecked? She was in the mood of stout old Luther, when he cried, "I am weary of life! O that the Lord would take me home!" Of Moses, asking, "Wherefore hast Thou afflicted me?" Of Paul, "I would rather depart." Father and lover torn from her, life seemed a dreary prospect.

Soppy skies lowered over the brown fields, shaking a chill mist from their dull expanse. The

drab picture outside was a replica of the one within. Southward the wild fowl flew high against the arch of monochrome, winging clamorous toward the warm bayous of the Southland.

"Chilly without, and miserable within," she thought, as she stood at the parlor window, looking up the winding road, and seeing a man stalking across the hill from the "Red Horse Tavern." Up the orchard he hurries, Pluto leaping to meet him with welcome barking; through the rear door he steps, along the wide hall, and enters the parlor door. As she turns to face him, he says, beseechingly:

"Edith, my beloved! I am here to beg forgiveness."

In a moment his arms enfolded her, and she was trembling with excess of joy. Tears rushed to her eyes, and for a long time she said never a word. It seemed neither had speech for the solemn rapture of that hour. When he finally spoke, it was to say:

"If a life devotion will heal that hurt, I have come to offer it. I know your secret. I met your brother in the West, and when I learned his story I stood revealed as the wickedest man alive. I came as fast as steam could carry me to implore your pardon. Can you grant it?"

Their lips met in one long kiss, and she put up her hand, with the ring flashing upon it, saying:

"Philip, it has never been off for a moment since you departed; and I had determined to wear it always. I did not blame you. Your temper is

hot; the circumstances were inexplicable. But all is well now between us."

As they walked, arm-in-arm, to the window, she said:

"How different the earth and the sky seem! The gray sky has turned to blue; and how brilliantly the sun shines!"

"Yes," said Philip. "The outer world rhymes to the inner, my dearie." Then he sang—

"'Tis summer and the days are long,  
When the heart, the heart is young."

"Do you see that man walking there?" said Edith. "I am so happy I could run out and say to that stranger, 'Do you know Philip has come back?' I want to tell all people my joy. But there is a carriage coming up. Church is not out yet; I wonder who it can be."

"Let us go out and see," said Ellis.

Standing close to support her, they watched the two drovers lift Colonel Satterlee from the vehicle. One ringing cry, "My father!" one leap like a gazelle, and she clasped him in her embrace. When he made no return, she looked closer, and one of the men explained, "He is ill just now, but will be well by and by."

Tenderly they bore him into the house, and in his familiar chair seated him. He stared vacantly about, and settled his eyes on the floor. He looked long at Edith, then at Philip, then dropped his gaze again. The coachman was called in, and was overjoyed to see his employer once more, and ran



to fetch his wife, whose apron-corner went to her eyes as she looked at him. Even old Pluto crept in, twisting his body with canine delight, and rubbed his nose against his master's hand, looking with asking eyes into his face, waiting for the customary word. Not getting it, the dog drew his rough tongue across the thin white hand which was almost transparent in its bloodless pallor, went to a corner near the wide fireplace, and dragged one of the Colonel's slippers toward him.

The drovers stood intent upon the scene. As the hound laid the shoe at Satterlee's feet, one of them turned away, with his knuckle in his eye, and said, to no one in particular: "That dumb critter 's got more sense 'an some folks, an' I could pick the folks. What you moonin' about, Abe?"

"I was thinking," replied the other, as they went out, "ef I knowed which one o' them 'ere cut-throats welted that old man, he'd be my meat. I'd fix him for fair; you hear me?"

When Mrs. Redmond returned from the meeting-house, her cup of bliss was full to find her own brother and Edith's lover restored to their home. And all day friendly neighbors called to rejoice with the family in the Satterlee homestead.

The Colonel seemed to know he was at home, and once or twice tried to speak; at least they thought so. He ate such simple food as they fed him, and sat where he was placed until some one moved him.

The specialists from the city—experts in brain diseases—could not find the cause of his ailment, but ordered that his bodily health be built up, and

hoped he might eventually be able to throw off the palsy.

On Hallowe'en they sat about the open hearth, where sizzled the logs; the sparks leaped up the roaring flue, and the glow fell across the floor, while shadows flickered on the walls.

Mrs. Redmond and her niece were working on Edith's wedding robes and discussing the mighty transformation of Laura McLaw since Pastor Ronan left Millbank. She had given up all former pleasures to devote herself to the smallpox patients among the lowly. Night and day she nursed and cheered them, and, despite old "Sinner's" entreaties, cared for them with her own hands.

When the hired nurses fled and neighbors shrank to enter the pest-ridden tenements, she stood by to minister and help. The doctors said she saved nine people by her own labors; and when her father became insistent and demanded that she give up the dangerous work, she rented a cottage among the poor, and for weeks slaved and drudged to rescue them from the pestilence. She was the angel of the stricken community. Women adored her, men worshiped her. Children left their mother's arms to tangle their dimpled hands in her hair. No pauper funerals were permitted. Out of her own purse she saw them decently dressed for the dreamless sleep, and composed them neatly in their plain coffins.

"A cheery heart is half the battle," she said.

She kindled hope, brought proper food and medicine, cleaned up their dwellings, met the ice-man at the doors he dared not enter, and shamed

the baker till he followed her up the stairs, carried the milk-jugs to the whole row when the dairyman would go no farther than the end of the street.

Philip sat apart, wondering where Beverly Ronan was.

It was Hallowe'en, the time of the fantastic carnival of the children in all Saxon lands. The eerie night for fortune-speering and fairy-seeing, when sweethearts strove to pull apart the kindly veil that hides the future with the aid of hemp-seed, roasted nuts, midnight mirrors, and turnip-fields; when children ducked spluttering in water-filled tubs catching apples in their teeth, and stretched cords across the walks to trip unwary pedestrians; when the wild-boy pack followed a fearless leader into cabbage-plots, and flung gates aside to revel in forbidden places; and wrinkled crones muttered as they cast salt into the fire that "auld Hornie" had unlocked the asbestos doors of his Hadean abode and called witch and warlock to his brimstone feast; while for six hours all the good angels turned their backs to this world, and sang:

"O, that mine eyes might closéd be  
To what concerns me not to see!"

A riding party of six loads of lads and lasses was going by with jingling bells and merry songs. They all loved Edith, and liked Philip, and, as they swept by, they cheered heartily, and then the strains of "Blue Juniata" rose on the air.

## A Modern Apollos

Mrs. Redmond caught Edith's arm, saying, "Look at your father."

He was moving his hands across his face, as if brushing away a mist. In his eyes dawning consciousness shone; his look was fixed on his daughter.

"Go to him," whispered Philip.

She kneeled before him, caught both his hands in hers, and held them fast.

His lips parted slowly. A heavenly smile lit up his wrinkled face, and he said, softly: "Agnes! Agnes!"

"Yes, father," faltered Edith.

"The bells have rung, the song is begun in the church. Let us not be late, dear."

He was in old England, among the downs of Sussex, far across the sea. Then a look of pain went over his face. He put up his hands to ward off a blow, trembled, as the blessed dew of tears, the first in weeks, gathered in his eyes. He said, looking around, "Where am I?"

"In your own home, Colonel," cried Ellis.

"Have I been ill?"

"Yes, sir; very sick, indeed; but you are better now."

In a few days he was mentally restored, and was preparing to give his daughter in marriage to her manly lover.

## CHAPTER XX

### An Interrupted Wedding

THE homelike rural mansion of Colonel Satterlee was filled to overflowing with the wedding guests. His marvelous return and complete restoration to health had interested the entire community, and all the old families of the county were invited to the feast. The men shook hands with him in unfeigned joy, and the women looked on him as one returned from the other world.

When he drove through Millbank in days gone by, he always had his buckboard full of children, who ran to meet him on the road. On his first appearance in public after his illness they caught his hands and his coat in their gladness; and he had to stop and kiss a score of them in going from his wagon to the store.

This honey-hearted soldier was adviser to half the town; and when he learned that the pestilence was still raging, only the doctor's stern dictum kept the enfeebled warrior from the smitten homes.

Every day he filled his cart with supplies, and made the hired man—Downey—drive the load to the Lower Bank, as the tenant district was called, and deliver it to Laura McLaw for the needy.

"'T would be worth a man's while," said Mi-

chael, on his return one day, "to run five mile to see Miss McLaw distributin' the clothing and fuel and food to the poor people. 'Ned,' she says, 'take that sack of flour to your mother. She's the best bread-maker in the row. Tell her to send the first two loaves to Granny Linn down by the pump. I'll take her the butter meself.' 'Nannie,' she calls, 'could ye carry this jar of peach preserves to cripple Burke on the third floor? Tell him the baker will be here with his rye-bread in one hour.' 'Dick,' says she agin, 'your toes are red with the cold, and ye have no stockings on at all. Could ye draw on this pair of woolen ones while ye ate this apple, my son? Ye could? Well, try it at once. Mrs. Murphy, how long would it take you to cut that flannel and make some wee shirts for the Ridley twins? No more than two hours? O, ye are me right hand, woman. And while ye're at it, take this tea to Becky Magoun, and, widout me knowin' it, slip this tobaccy to ould Daddy Biggs. Here's an overcoat will fit the wood-sawyer, and some caps and mittens for the boys who carried water for me all last week.

"'What's in this basket, Aunty Morey? A roasted turkey, sure enough. Cut some meat from the breast, and go up the alley to Nancy Newlin. She's been livin' on gruel for two weeks. Oranges, ye say? How good the people are! Bless them! Come here, Mrs. Wilcox, take these four oranges right off to little Betty Munro. She is sitting up in the bed this morning for the first time. I noticed her lips are parched. Do you peel the fruit

and take out the sections, and feed them to her yourself. You know how. It will heal her feverish mouth. Here, boys, how many cookies will your pockets hold? Fill them, and then wheel these potatoes in that barrow along the back street, and give every one who asks a basketful. An' you, Mr. Ragin, after you put on this worsted jacket and have a drink of this fresh buttermilk, you will help me get this meat to that perishin' German family on the top floor, who lost their father yesterday. You 'll have the grave ready for him at noon? You will? Thank you. What would I do without you?"

"An' so she goes on every day. O, sir, that woman is a wonder—a mortal wonder! The way she manages them and gets all the work done!"

The genial coachman kept the Colonel informed of Laura's ministry, and took her the invitation to Edith's wedding.

"Tell Mr. Satterlee," said she, "I can't be there. I am needed here every waking moment. Tell my schoolmate—Edith—that I wish her all good things in her wedded life. May her joy be as deep in her new life as mine is here! Deeper there is none."

The Colonel was quietly happy, as he welcomed the guests, and very proud of his fair daughter, who was to be joined that night to the gallant soldier who had saved him on the battlefield.

The men were reminiscent, and thought of former marriage festivals; and the various matrons were prophetic, looking into the future, and wondering what weal or woe hung on this union.

The young people were alive only to the present moment. Laughter and greetings went round. Compliments on dress or hair or eyes, glances and innocent airs, handclasps and downdropping lashes, songs and jests and kindly inquiries of folks where fathers' fathers had been friends. It was a pleasant scene.

A few moments before the hour fixed for the rite, a cab came up to the door. The horse was heated, and had obviously come from the city. Two gentlemen, evidently total strangers, walked up to the house, and asked for Colonel Satterlee. He came, and led them into the parlor.

"Here is my card, sir," said the younger, a sharp, quick-spoken, keen-eyed man, with straight lips, pale skin, and light side-whiskers. The card bore the words:

J. W. BARTON,

OF

BARTON, SIMS & ALLEN, *Attorneys,*

*New York.*

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Barton. Have you come to see me on business?"

"Yes, sir; on business of importance."

"I must ask you to wait. My daughter is to be married to-night. The hour is at hand. I am to stand at her side during the ceremony. Of course, you will wait half an hour or so?"

The other man, an elderly, bald, and rotund, gouty-limbed and purple-visaged man, with an English accent, said:

"Certainly, sir; we need not hurry."



## An Interrupted Wedding 265

While the father crossed to the parlor to receive the bride under the canopy of flowers, the strains of the wedding march flowed in at the door, and, borne upon it, came bride and groom. Edith was surpassingly lovely. The rebound from her long suspense and gnawing sorrow had been so sudden that it acted on her like an intoxicant. Her limpid gray eyes, full of sunshine, lighted up a pure, chastened face, flushed with rose-tints on cheeks and brow, which was framed in by an aureole of soft brown hair. Her bridal robes were of purest white satin, with lilies of the valley on the bodice, and pink roses were borne in the right hand, while the left lay in the arm of Philip.

Of all the eyes that watched them, only one pair of eyes was sad. Kindly Mrs. Redmond looked through a mist of tears at her beauteous niece.

A mature minister, schoolmate of Colonel Satterlee's, stood, with black book open, to recite the solemn words. When the bride and groom were in place, and the murmurs of admiration had died into silence, through which the ticking of the tall clock could be heard, he began, with deliberate emphasis, to say the rich, historic service:

"We are assembled here in the sight of God and all these witnesses, to unite this man and woman in the holy estate of matrimony. Therefore, if any one can show just cause why they should not be joined, let him now speak—"

At this the officiating clergyman paused a moment. The stillness deepened. Attention was

strained. And he raised his head to begin again, when a voice outspoke, sharply:

"I forbid this marriage. It must stop."

There was a chorus of gasps from the women, a buzz of amazement from the men. The trustful gladness died out of Edith's eyes, and Ellis stared at the speaker wonderingly.

It was the lawyer, Barton, who forbade the marriage. As he stepped forward and scanned Philip, the latter looked at the minister, and said, "Go on, sir."

"It would be wrong to go on," he replied, "until we hear this man, who challenges the lawfulness of this marriage." Then, turning to Barton, "What is the legal hindrance, sir?"

"Let me speak a few moments, and I will make it clear. My name is Barton, of Barton, Sims & Allen, attorneys, of New York. Three years ago our English correspondents wrote us concerning two children, male and female, who had inherited a Welsh estate through their mother. She had married a British army officer, who proved a scapegrace, and ran off with a stage dancer, leaving her with a girl baby and a boy three years old. To hide her dishonor, she fled to America. Being in poverty, this well-born woman of rich family was compelled to take passage in a sailing vessel with few passengers. On the long voyage the broken-hearted mother died, and was buried at sea. The children were placed in an orphan asylum in New York on landing. No one had heard the woman's name on the ship, and the boy could only bruise a few words on his lisping lips.

"He said, as they thought, that his name was Philip Ellis. So the children were called Ellis; and when my friend, Hon. James Fisher, of London, came over to look them up, it was a difficult task. After long search we found the sister, who was a schoolteacher in New York, but only lately got on track of the brother. We learned he went into the army, but lost all trace of him after that. By chance I learned that he came here with his colonel at the close of the war, and we came to ask Colonel Satterlee about his present abode. We arrived a few minutes before the wedding. I stepped to the door, and whispered to a lady, asking the groom's name. She said, 'Philip Ellis.' I was startled and, for a moment, stunned. He was unwittingly about to wed under a false name. I could not let this young lady become the innocent victim of such a mistake, so I spoke up and stopped the service.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this groom is not Philip Ellis, but Philip Elliott, of Glamorgan, Wales, heir to an ancient and honorable name and considerable estate, which awaits him jointly with his sister. All of which I have the documents with me to prove. Mr. Fisher, please step forward."

Fisher did so, and drew from a portfolio a number of stamped and signed papers, which established Barton's statements beyond all gainsaying.

"Now," said Barton, "let the wedding go on. All is clear and straightforward now."

His every word bore out his story. No one could doubt its veracity, and, after a moment,

Edith put out her left hand, which Philip took in his, and, while their eyes met in fullest faith, he lifted the golden circlet, and said, in a tone of conscious pride: "With this ring I thee wed; with all my worldly goods I thee endow, and take thee for my wife, for better or worse, until death do us part." Then he bent and kissed her.

"Now," said the preacher, with just a hint of triumph in his voice, as a hum of gladness swept through the air, "I have the pleasure of introducing to you all Mr. and Mrs. Philip Elliott, and," as he caught the groom's hand, "of wishing you a long and happy wedded life."

There was a rush of congratulations and felicitations, kisses, and feminine embraces; but the groom forgot all when the erect old Colonel took his hand, and said, tenderly, "Philip, my son!"

## CHAPTER XXI

### Barbara Lawson Abducted

THE home of Alexander Lawson, the Delhurst attorney and agent for Scotch land-owners, who possessed many farms in the county, was the most pretentious in the place. It was airy, well-ordered, and comfortable, free from superfluity or pretense. The good sense and correct taste obvious in every room were characteristic of the mistress of the household, who was a fresh, comely matron, of rosy complexion and benevolent manner. Her step was vigorous, her voice soothing, and perpetual amenity beamed from her countenance. No care had wrinkled her brow, and no sorrow corroded her heart, which was due to a deep piety that came as an inheritance from a line of saintly Highland progenitors; for both Lawson and his wife were Scottish born, and had emigrated to America after they were wedded.

Her husband was an eccentric man, born for his profession; active, dextrous, vigilant, able to manage the multiplied affairs committed to him, and vastly delighted by a successful financial maneuver. He was strictly honest, somewhat rigid and formal, as becomes the man of precedent and equity, and given to admiration of the past. He

liked the customs of dead years, and in manners and dress betrayed his predilection for an age long gone. His voice was metallic, his air magisterial. His severe face was softened by snowy hair and hedged with mutton-chop whiskers, closely trimmed; and his spectacles gave him an air of vigilance and legal sufficiency. He was not talkative, and his religion was of the ethical rather than mystical type. He wanted his wife and daughter to do all the speaking and singing for the family, while he contributed freely of his means, saying: "The exercise of religion is necessary to an all-round healthy person; but let all be done discreetly, decently, and in good form." He dearly prized his good financial record, his little Delhurst bank being known far and wide for its stability.

Barbara seemed a blend of the good mental qualities of both parents, with her sire's patrician bearing and her mother's benign simplicity. She was, in her youthful and healthful beauty, equipped to make swift conquests in the social arena, had not her schoolmate, Beverly Ronan, early won her love. So complete was her faith in him that all other men seemed merely persons of the masculine gender, and all equally indifferent to her.

As she came out for a seat on the porch overlooking the broad river, she wondered how the world could be so lovely when his letter had left life so barren to her. The amber Indian summer haze lay on the bluffs across the stream. The swallows were preening for homeward flight. One late robin was chirping in the dahlia-bed. The

cloudless arch of blue touched the far-off tinted tree-tops, and the warm south wind was laden with salubrious odors, the balsam of fir and gum. Only Touser was surly.

"Whom is he bow-wow-ing at?" asked Mrs. Lawson.

"I think he is barking at 'the Minty.' Barney is at the gate and seems inclined to come in."

"Shut up, ye gomeril! Bad manners to ye!" Foley was saying to the canine guardian, "or I'll knock sivin kinds o' yelps out o' ye wid the toe o' me brogue! What willabaloo have ye now? Be off wid yourself, or I'll lep down on yer troat, so I will."

When Touser was satisfied, Barney came up to the house, saying:

"'T is a foine day fer pitaty diggin' an' turf stackin'. How are ye all, shure?"

"All well, Mr. Foley. How is Judy, your wife?"

"It is well she is. Tubbe sure, she cries, unbeknownst to me, fer her ould home away over the broad ocean in Mayo—God bless us!—but I would n't stir a fut to go there at all."

"Why not, Barney?"

"Bekase ye'd not see a floury pitaty mebbe onct in a month, an' here ye kin git yer fill o' 'em along wid a sup o' milk. Judy is ginerilly all right, on'y when I come rowlin' home in the mornin' full o' poteen. Then, begorra, she's as cross as a weasel. But it's all the one thing to me: wimmen have a gift to talk, ye know; and Judy is a decent poor sowl as iver left the Cove o' Cork to kem to Ameriky."

"What have you to sell to-day?"

"I have ony a wheen o' cresses, an' a ha'porth o' wintergreen berries; but they are not fer sale. I am not a Minty now. 'Tis a mane trade, an', like the felly in the powder-mill, I was always lookin' fer a rise; an' I got it too. I am now a drover's helper, proddin' fat steers to Eastern markets. So, havin' a day off, I brought these tokens to Miss Barbara, thinkin' I might have a talk wid her, I dinnaw."

"A talk with me?" said Miss Lawson. "Of course, you may talk all you please. I know you are a friend of the family, Barney."

"Shure, I would be if I had a chanst; but I know me place. Me clothes look like a scarecrow in a turnip-patch; but the knot on the end o' me neck is right as a trivet, an' me heart would n't ha-a-rum no livin' soul."

Mrs. Lawson had retired within the house, and Barbara observed:

"What is on your mind, Mr. Foicy?"

"It is this, ma'am. Durin' me last thrip East I was colloquin with Beverly Ronan, an' savin' yer presence, we was talkin' about yerself."

"Mr. Ronan and I are not so friendly as we were, Barney," said Barbara.

"Shure," speculated "the Minty," "ye are not innemies at all, at all?"

Her face paled quickly, and her eyes moistened, as she replied: "No, no, not enemies. I shall always be greatly interested in my schoolmate, and watch hi., career, with pride in his achievements."

"Miss Lawson," said Foley, as he locked the



fingers of both hands over one knee, and tilted back on the rustic bench: "I beg yer pardin fer bein' impydent, that is, if I am impydent; but I want to git one thing through me thatch. May I ask a question that'll go to the beyant ind o' me trouble?"

"Speak freely, Mr. Foley. If it is a proper question, I will answer."

"Do you still love Mr. Ronan?"

The telltale blood mounted to cheek and brow, and the gray eyes which lifted to the far-off hills shot tender gleams from under their long lashes. Her laugh was low, and not mirthful, as she answered:

"Mr. Ronan and I have broken our correspondence. He is not the man I thought he was."

"The Minty" had marked the signs of her unquenched affection, and said, as he took a letter from his pocket:

"Did you write him that note, Miss Lawson?"

She read the forged epistle with deep concern, and said, quietly, "I did not."

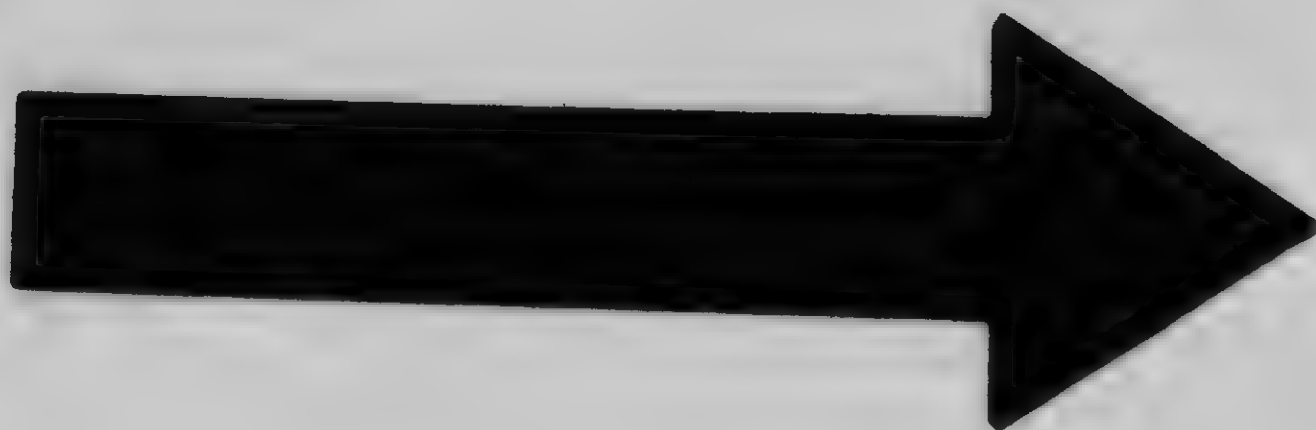
"But he resaved that eyedential writin' from you, wid yer name to it, and he thinks you are stone cold to him now."

"Some enemy has done this," murmured the maiden. "I could not be so cruel."

"I knew it, ma'am. I knew it. I am heart-scalded by this double misery. Beverly loves you, an' niver loved anny other in the wide world."

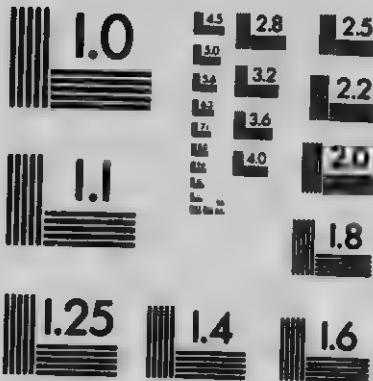
"Are you certain, Mr. Foley?"

"I am. His heart lepped whin I talked about you, and he praised you above all mortal wimmen,



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1853 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482-0300 - Phone  
(716) 288-5989 - Fax

an' when he read me this last note from you, his voice just wakened under the words. An' 't is worse agin me it goes every day to see you two driftin' asunder."

"How did you get this letter, Barney?"

"I rogued it out of his desk, tubbe sure, knowin' by natural sinse ye niver wrote it, an' maning to ask ye. Heaven will fergive me fer it."

"Who would be wicked enough to do such an infamous wrong?" asked the damsel.

"Who?" broke in Foley. "Who but that foul-hearted Judas, Deynell. He is the plotter, an' no other. Whin he is not at one thrick, he is at another."

"What can I do to right it, Barney?"

"Lave that to me. We will need all our wits, and mebbe some borrowed ones, to spile his plans. Do ye now listen, Miss Lawson, an' we will thrip him yet. An' fer fear ye think I'm pryin' into yer affairs, let me tell ye, Miss Lawson, what Judy Foley's husband passed through since I last saw yer face ferninst me. As I was comin' to the tavern after stalin' this lyin' letter, nippin' along through the thick o' the night in my bone-brakin' charryit on a lonely part o' the highway, I was dragged from me ould cowpay and malthreated severely by three maylicious spalpeens. I was badly bate and carted away to a dape underground habitation, where I found this same Deynell's drove o' black-harted bastes set on murdherin' me be-kase I interfered wid his plans aginst Beverly and yerself. I was to be trun down a rocky pit an' left there by a notorious reprobate, who resaived

three hundred dollars fer doin' the scandalous deed; but Heaven saved me insignificant small life almost by a miracle; an' why I dinnaw.

"While I stood there among 'em, stitchin' some tags o' prayers together, an' watchin' the leader out of the heel o' my eye, they wuz debaytin' who should do the foul act, one spoke up and offered to do it. After I kem in, he larned that I was to suffer bekase I was Ronan's frind. It seemed he liked Ronan, who onct sarved him well, an' he daytarmined to return the favor by savin' me, if possible. Whin we walked away from the light to the hole where I was to be flung, he whispered in me ear: 'I'm yer frind. Obey me.' 'Begorra,' thinks I, 'here is me petition answered in the nick o' time.' 'Whin I shoot,' sez he, 'do ye fall flat and crape to the right into the darkness, an' wait till I kum.' Wid that he cuts the cords that held me hands, wid a pocket-knife, as we slowly walked along. 'T was more 'n half dark where we stood, on the rim o' me grave, an' I cud hear the wather roarin' below, an' whin he shot the pistol beside me head it fairly deafened me. I screamed like a banshee, and fell flat behind him; an' while the others were listenin' to the yelpin' echoes, I made off into the thick dark. On'y fer that felly bein' so foxy, mebbe 't is in Chiny I'd be now, I dinnaw. Then he run back to the light, actin' shaky and hanted, an' askin' fer a drink o' bug-juice. An' soon they all wint off. An' musha me, but 't was dark; a bushel o' black cats is a chandyleer to it. You cud take a handful o' that darkness, like soot, an' wash yer face wid it! An' that still, yer smallest

breath sounded like ye wuz dyin' wid asmy. I did n't dare to stir fer what seemed the butt-end o' a year, but 't was on'y three hours, an' I saw me frind comin' wid a torch.

" 'Hullo, Irish?' he called, an' I run out to meet him, rejoicing bravely.

" 'Hush!' sez he; 'yer supposed to be dead,' sez he, 'an' walkin' shoe-mouth deep in brimstone, where ye cud light yer pipe wid any hair o' yer head.' He laughed a long while, an' sez, 'They think yer buried widout any wake at all,' sez he; 'an' ye have no thought of it,' sez he. "'Tis far from ye,' he sez. 'Sit down here where we played seven-up, an' I 'll tell ye all about this uproar,' sez he. 'Onct the law forced me to let a doctor put poison into our baby's arrum,' he sez, 'an' it rotted my darlin' till his swate sowl wint out,' he sez; an' wid that he began to cry, an', begorra, I cried too. 'I cursed the law—the damnable law,' he sez. 'I wanted to throttle it,' he sez; 'double-blast it!' he sez. 'From that hour I was agin it,' he sez. 'An' the on'y man that gave me a worrud o' cheer or a helpin' hand wuz Mr. Ronan,' he sez. 'An' I helped you to-day fer his sake,' he sez. 'He's the doggondest best man that ever lived,' he sez, 'as sure as yer a foot high.'

" 'What are ye doin' among Deynell's buckaneers?' I axed him.

" 'Well, Mike,' he sez, 'or whatever yer name is,' he sez, 'I 'll tell ye. I 'm the best mechanic in Millbank, ef I do say it meself,' he sez. 'An' one of his outfit heard me cussin' the law,' he sez; 'an' needin' a man to fix their presses, he thinks I will

join 'em, if they pay me big money,' he sez. 'So he names it to me slyly, an' I go in,' he sez. 'They need my work, an' pay me well, but I wish I was out of it,' he sez. 'I tould 'em I was sick to-night wid what I did to you,' he sez, 'an' could n't work fer a few hours, an' here I am!' he sez. 'Now, come on wid me, an' I'll get you outside the skin o' the world; an' I want one favor from you,' he sez. 'Kape mum about this fer two months; then I'll be far from here. Look at that money,' he sez, showin' a roll o' bills. 'That's tree hunderd dollars I got fer killin' ye,' he sez; 'fer castin' ye inter the innards o' the airth,' he sez. 'Skip out o' these diggins fer awhile. Larry tould the folks at the tavern ye wuz gone home; he tould the truth unbeknownst, fer ye are goin' there.' Whin we got near out o' the den, he sez: 'Flaherty, or whatever yer name is,' he sez, 'we must go mity smooth at the entrance to this pigsty. The outside guard is a strappin', double-fisted Naygur, an' we must sneak past him, fer he cud kill both of us.'

"It was hazy dark, just before dawn, an' we got out o' the stable aisy. In the woods he shook my hand, and said good-bye. 'Pat,' he sez, 'tell Ronan we're even now,' an, back he went, an' I got to town and kem West on the train. Is n't it a quare tale, ain't it?"

"Passing strange," commented Barbara. "Have you any suggestions to make concerning Mr. Ro-Beverly?"

"I have this," replied "the Minty." "He is coming home to-day, on the four o'clock stage-coach, so his mother tould me this marnin'. If ye

cud happen to be at his house when he arrives, and give him a chanst to explain, I think ye cud forgive the bye, and let bygones be bygones."

"I will think it over carefully. At least, I must see him while he is here. How long will he be in Delhurst?"

"That I dinnaw," said the pilgrim, taking up his empty basket. "I think he will shtop here on'y a little time. Good-bye to ye the day."

As he went away, she thought of the past, and pondered what her duty was when he came home.

"At least," she cogitated, "he asked me to release him, and it would be unwomanly to meet him in his mother's house. He will call to see me. If he still loves me he will; if not, I do not want to see him."

That afternoon she dressed in her daintiest gown, put on the ornaments he liked best, and deliberately let her thoughts ramble backward into the fond old days when every girlish fancy linked her future with his. About five o'clock, her heart gave a great bound, as she saw him lift the latch of the gate, and step up the wide walk just as he used to. A little heavier, she noted, and more settled; a touch of dignity, a calm reserve, yet the same athletic form, with coiling muscles, moving easily under his close-buttoned coat. The same steady poise, and the suggestion of strength, which made him the village Hercules when handling unruly steeds at his father's trade. As he came near, she saw sadness in his face, and noted how pale he was. He wore



the air of one going to perform a stern duty which could not be shirked. A scarlet spot burned in each cheek, and she resolved to greet him quietly, yet kindly; to show no sense of wrong, yet wait for his apology, which she felt would not long be delayed.

Their eyes met, and she was about to speak, when Mr. Lawson rushed out of the house, railing loudly at Ronan:

"Stop, sir! halt where you are!"

Ronan, in his rich voice, with the old thrill in it, said, "May I not come in, sir?"

"No, sir!" roared Lawson. "You can never enter this house again. Begone!"

"Can I not speak with you, or your daughter?"

"No, sir; you can not!" his wrath was towering every instant. "Leave my premises, I say!"

"Why am I driven out like a dog?" asked Ronan, with a trace of warmth and a lifting of his shoulders.

"Because you are a dog; a heartless puppy! You made love to Barbara for years, and then cast her off when it pleased your fancy to do so. You have no honor, no manhood, no character! You are a fool, and a dangerous deceiver! I liked you once, but now I despise you! I hate the sight of you! Leave, I say, or it will be worse for you!"

Beverly stood his ground, saying quietly: "I have done wrong, Mr. Lawson. Let me ask forgiveness for it."

This was like oil poured in flame, that shot up furiously. Lawson was always a choleric man, and now he was beside himself with rage.

"No, no; I say no! You smug-faced, meechin hypocrite! Seek that gate quick, or I'll have your dirty life!" He ran into his room, and came out with his shotgun; but his wife and daughter clung to his arms, as he struggled to level it at Ronan.

"I see," said Beverly, "you are in a mood to do murder. You will be wiser soon; I will return then and see you."

On this the clergyman walked out, leaving the lawyer fulminating threats of destruction if Ronan ever set foot on his property again.

At the tea-table the attorney's family was silent. He was glum, his wife was weeping, and his daughter bitterly grieved. Her affection was with her lover, yet she could not demonstrate it, because of his unmanly conduct in writing his last letter, which both her mother and father had read.

After eating very little, she went into the garden. The sky was now overcast with mackerel clouds, and the moth-colored twilight was fluttering down on the earth. What should she do? Beverly might leave the village forever, unfor-given. And she felt he had come to ask a restoration of the old ties. But her innate modesty would not let her seek him, and he was hindered from seeking her.

"Mother, what would you do?" she asked.

The experienced yet puzzled matron weighed the question some time, and said:

"We must go to the Autumn Festival to-night at the Church. You must take your part, as you promised. He may be there. Your father will be absent; and perhaps you may exchange a few

words, unnoticed. I would n't let him go off hopeless. I like him, in spite of all."

But Ronan was not at the Festival, and heard nothing of "Bingen on the Rhine," or "Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night." Nor did he see Barbara, in her royal robes, as "Queen of the Year," deliver her heaped-up fruits to the Sunday-school to be distributed on Thanksgiving-day among the poor.

Wending her way home with her mother, she was the saddest girl in Delhurst, and longed to reach her own room, to relieve her sorrow in a burst of tears.

During the Festival, a closed carriage drove through the edge of the town, and halted in a lane near Lawson's house, in the shadow of a clump of locust-trees. In the vehicle was Major Marley and a bullet-headed, burly ruffian. The son of Mars was accompanied by Bonaparte Blinn, a splay-footed, colossal river thug, and was intent on doing the will of Deynell by kidnaping Barbara Lawson, that the astute doctor might gain her smiles by rescuing her from the clutches of her abductors. His reward was to be the forged will which would make him Colonel Satterlee's legatee.

"We must make one hand wash the other," said the cunning physician. "You help me, and I will help you, you understand?"

The spy had reported to Marley the probable whereabouts of Miss Lawson, and his plan was to seize her in her room. Access to the house was easy, as Touser had followed the women to the Festival. Mr. Lawson was at the Masonic Lodge,

and only an old servant was at home. She sat, half asleep, in front of the door when Boney (as Marley called his confederate) crept up the back walk under the grape-arbor, in the dense gloom, and entered Barbara's room, which was on the ground floor, and had a door opening on a side porch. Hiding in a closet, he heard mother and daughter return; and soon Miss Lawson came to her room.

Closing the door and locking it, she sat down, began to weep, and was soon sobbing violently. She did not hear a stealthy step behind her, nor see the villain, who put his rough hand to her throat. A scream was stifled into a gasp, and she fainted. Holding a sponge saturated with chloroform to her face a few moments, he lifted her, opened the porch door, and went swiftly across a field to the carriage. Marley had a dark-lantern, and looked closely at the unconscious face.

"Deynell is a good judge of female beauty," he said. "Let us be off quick."

As the carriage hurried into the lonely road that led to the river, Boney chuckled, "' earned that three hundred easy, did n't I, pard?"

"You did; but I expect to make thousands out of this job."

When the attorney's household were astir the next morning, Barbara did not answer the breakfast call; and her mother, going to her room, found it empty. The door stood open, and some of the rain which had fallen during the latter part of the night had dashed in upon the carpet. Her hat and gloves were gone; she had departed fully

dressed. There was no sign of a struggle. What could it all mean? The storm had obliterated any footprints, and everything seemed as usual about the place.

An awful thought rived the lawyer's heart, and he hurried over to Ronan's house.

"Is Beverly in?" he queried.

"No, sir," said his mother. "He went out about nine last night, saying nothing, and has not yet returned."

"Just as I feared!" cried Lawson. "Barbara and Beverly have eloped. O ingratitude! Heaven pity me! My only child has left me, and with one who spurned her but a month ago! I will curse her for this!"

Back to his home he hurried. "Wife!" he called, "our daughter has disgraced us! Fled in the night with Ronan, whom I kicked from my door-sill. We are dragged down in shame! Would I had buried her, before she came to this!"

"How do you know this?" asked his spouse.

"It is plain as a pikestaff! A little common, cornfield sense will tell you where she has gone. She departed all dressed. Ronan disappeared at nine last night. Put these facts together."

His love seemed to turn to hatred.

"To think she would cast us off for that ranting Pharisee! God help me, mother; she shall never return! I will never call her child of mine again!"

In his insane fever, he went to her room, gathered up every article of clothing or bric-a-brac that his daughter owned, carried them across the lawn

to the fence, and flung them into the mud of the highway; nor did he desist till everything belonging to Barbara was hurled away.

"Tell the beggars to come and get them, mother; we have no child now. This is our reward for a life's devotion. May all the devils speed her now, and may I never look upon her face again!"

## CHAPTER XXII

### On Folly Island

**B**EVERLY'S intention when leaving his father's home, on the evening of the abduction, was to return in a few hours.

His steps were turned in the direction of "the Minty's" cabin, and, as he walked, he brooded darkly on the savage treatment he had received that day from Mr. Lawson. His knitted brows and knotted hands showed he was contending with warring emotions, and several times he stopped and faced about, as if intending to seek the lawyer and have it out with him. The attorney's words irked him greatly.

He found Barney at home, and asked him to light his lantern and walk down to the river bank, where he read to him the letter of the dead convict.

Foley was fond of adventure, and under his ill-kempt exterior was a world of romantic sentiment. This, however, is not unusual with natives of the "tight little isle across the bay."

He listened to the document with delight, and said:

"'Tis a quare letter, tubbe shure. It minds me o' the tales o' the Wicklow Glens, in the days

o' the risin', when Smith O'Brien was to the fore. What will ye do about it, Bev?"

"Well," mused the parson, "I am nonplused. I scarcely know what my duty is."

"Take a Slieven's advice; 't is as chape as buttermilk. Go and get that money as soon as ye can."

"But, Mr. Foley, it is not my money."

"What nonsense have ye? Shure, 't is as much yours as anny wan's, an' small good 't is doin' there," retorted the Emerald. "Some liberrather should set that money free, an' give it a chanst to do some sarvice fer some wan."

"Will you go with me on the expedition, Barney?"

"Faith, I'd like nawthin' better; but to-marra night I must be on the road with a herd o' cattle. If I go at all, it must be to-night, and be back to-morra."

"Have we time enough for the job?" asked Ronan.

"Lashins o' time. There is a boat just below, I used when I was a "minty," an' went fishin' fer catfish in the slough over there. I have the use of it at anny time from Mulvihill. The night is young, an' we can drop down to Folly Island before midnight, an' dig up the stuff, whatever it is, an' be back by noon to-morra. There's an ould spade at the landin'; I digged worms wid it fer fishin'. Let us be off wid ourselves."

"I wish I had told the folks at home I would be out all night. I could make the fugue with no misgivings then."



"Niver mind," said the eager tramp. "If ye return wid a pot o' pirates' goold, ye can sing 'Garrywen an' Glory,' an' they won't mention yer absence this side o' the far ind o' doomsday. Kem along, Beverly."

In a few minutes the boat was loosed, and the exploiters were adrift on the turbid stream, running four miles an hour.

With willing hands they bent the oars, and shot along, with rattling rowlocks, under the calm stars, past the lonely islands, where only a few sleepy birds in the overhanging branches chirped as they passed. From the far shore an owl called querulously, and a dog howled in the thick bottom woods.

About one o'clock in the morning, the ferry lights of the city of P—— twinkled, as they swung round the bend, keeping close to the bank, in the swift current. Out in the broad starlight reach of the river lay Folly Island, a low, pear-shaped spit of sand, half covered with trees and tangled vines. The place was named because of a large residence, built before the war at vast expense by a wealthy distiller for a summer home. He soon tired of his costly habitation, and left it deserted. No one cared to live there, and the decaying domicile was called "Benson's Folly," and the estate was known far and near as Folly Island.

Sometimes a few fishermen or a picnic party went through the silent rooms and dusty halls. The wild creatures of the woods ventured into it, squirrels raced over the edge of the roof, and yellowhammers rapped on the gable lintels all the

summer through. A few months before the midnight visit, it was rumored that the place was rented, and once or twice a small skiff had gone over from the northern shore.

As the two explorers ran down beside the island cautiously, a steamboat came chuffing up in the far channel. The light from her jackstaff and open furnace doors revealed to Foley and Ronan the dilapidated house, hid in the rank vegetation. Catching hold of a bush, "the Minty" held the batteau against the bank, while they studied the lay of the land. The house was closely scanned—the broken windows and unpainted doors, the rotting arbors and weatherbeaten verandas.

Foley noted that one side of the house was close to the water, and a piazza, with much scroll work and fancy railing, projected over the stream. The heavy stone steps were mossgrown, and the brick walks choked with weeds. When the steamer went by, and the stars reflected in the stream shined out again amid the waves of its wake, like a prairie of wind-cuffed blossoms, Ronan whispered to his partner, saying:

"There is a light in a room on the far side of the house. I can see its yellow beams falling on the water."

"Thru' for ye," observed Barney. "Some one is livin' there. The bosthoons have a quare residence; but every man to his taste, as the ould woman said whin she kissed the cow."

"Who do you suppose it is?" asked Beverly.

"Begorra," chuckled "the Minty," "if we knew that, and had our stirabout, we might go to bed.

Look out for the brush, now; I'll let the yawl drift fer a bit."

In a few moments the craft ran, by a turn of the oar from Ronan, who sat in the stern, into a shelving shore of sand; and they got out, judging they must be near the desired spot.

"Let us pull the dingey into the bushes," said Foley, who was a careful traveler. "We don't want anny wan pryin' about."

This was done, and they dodged through the bushes in the thick shadows, scaring a snake, that went hissing away in the leaves. They found the trees precisely as described, and cut a fishline into two pieces twelve feet long, which was the distance between their trunks. A small cord was bound around each tree, the measuring lines attached and brought together in a point southward. Then Foley threw off his coat, and the loose earth flew from the old spade.

It was filled ground evidently, and the big roots were all cut by a previous digger. At the depth of three feet his implement struck a board, which proved to be part of a common box.

When it was unearthed, they found a package wrapped in papers and covered with a piece of oil-cloth. It was closely packed with grass and leaves. Unrolling the bundle, with beating hearts, they saw, in the lantern's glow, a bundle of banknotes.

Barney's bronzed face shined with satisfaction as he handled the parcel; but before he could speak, Ronan blew out the light, and pulled him flat in the bushes. "Hist! s-s-sh; hark!" he whispered.

A rattle of oars was heard, and they knew that a boat was being pulled from the town to the island. Parting the vines, they saw the craft, with a dim lantern therein. Two men were in it. One was rowing; the other carried a large burden in his arms. They were headed for a shoal landing just above the treasure-seekers. They conversed a few moments, in language dripping with obscenity.

When they landed, the rower, a giant in size, lifted the weight from the other, and, in the lantern's feeble glimmer, the two men in hiding could see that it was the form of a woman.

Swiftly they hurried into the copse toward the house, a trail of sulphurous speech reeking behind them as they went out of sight.

Beverly had a sharp sub-consciousness that they had seen part of a great crime.

"What does that mean, Barney?"

"Shure, t'ie sorra a know I know; but I suspicion thim two haythins are up to no good, this night."

"What shall we do? Go home and count old Hahn's hoard?"

"Niver!" said Barney, firmly. "Me ould fayther, heaven be his bed, tould me to help anny woman in distress; and, be all the saints, we must be afther these midnight blackguards. Let us put back this plunder fer the prisint; we kin return fer it in due toime, and follow that couple of yahoos to the house. They hev weepins, no doubt; but we are two to two, and niver fear, we 'll manage to hould 'em hard an' fast."

"All right," said Ronan; "I am with you. Perhaps we can rescue her; but we must beware of rashness. Let us reconnoiter carefully."

When close to the house they lurked a moment in the shrubbery, and resolved to approach the lighted room by the side porch next to the river.

The criminals, feeling themselves wholly safe in their island refuge, had taken no precaution against eavesdroppers. The sound of low laughter and hum of conversation came from the room indicated.

"Let us leave our shoes here, and our coats," said Beverly. "That creaky gallery will betray us unless we walk like cats."

"Right ye are," quoth Foley. "I am wid ye, now. I am lightest, Beverly; let me do a stunt o' spyin' fer meself."

Over the moldering floor of the rickety balcony crept the courageous "Minty," till he could peep through the broken slat of a shutter, and survey the place.

It was a large, square dining-room, and had once been handsomely appointed. The walls were paneled in oak, and girders crossed the ceiling; a wainscoting ran round the apartment.

Five persons were there. On a couch lay the captive, whose face he could not see. A wrinkled woman, with a complexion like the skin side of a flitch of bacon, her hard face made harder by one blind eye, sat near the sufferer; while a shock-headed boy was placing food on the table. The two kidnapers sat on a settee by the far wall, and

Marley was counting out some money in the hand of the rascal called "Boney."

Foley knew none of the persons, and was about to retreat, when the girl turned her dazed face, drawn with pain, to the lamp; and Barney's heart stood still. "Howly saints!" he gasped. "It is Barbara Lawson!"

Swiftly he crept back to Ronan, who had waited in the shadow of a juniper-tree, and said, excitedly:

"Beverly, me boy, heavin has led us this thrip, sure. Who d'ye think the leddy is?"

"I have no idea, Barney."

"No wan but Barbara Lawson. The rascallions have s. len her from home, and she that wake wid drugs she can't spake or lift her head!"

Ronan leaned against a tree for support, his brain seething. The earth seemed to rock beneath him. "Barbara," he moaned; "my own dear Barbara! Come, Foley; let us go in and save her."

"Bide a wee," said "the Minty," "till we make a plan. Wan o' the woman-stalers is a big, dark, slouchy tarrier, as strong as a hickory saplin', wid muscle in his flat chest like the ropes o' a ship. The ither is a mite bigger 'n I am. The boy will not lift a finger; but the ould she-wolf may be dangerous. Would you think it best to drop down to the city and git the police, or tackle the crew ourselves?"

Ronan was boiling with rage, and answered: "No man can tell what will befall Miss Lawson in the hour or two we would waste getting the officers here. Let us attack them at once."

"All hunk, me hearty!" whispered Barney, whose Donnybrook blood was up. "But mind two things: Keep cool and steady, and rush them hard at the start."

When each had selected a stout club from the woodpile behind the kitchen, they climbed the damp stairs, and crept to the door of the lighted room.

"Peep through, and get your bearings," whispered Ronan, after a long look. "Leave the big fellow to me; you take the other thief, and show no mercy to the vermin. Now, Barney!"

With a crash, they threw themselves against the door, and an ear-splitting yell woke the silent chambers of the mansion, as they rushed in. Both the desperadoes were startled; the boy ran, screaming, and the old hag shivered with fear in a corner.

Marley jerked a pistol from his hip-pocket, and, warding Barney's fierce blow with his left arm, which was broken by the bludgeon, he fired pointblank at "the Minty's" head. The ball struck above Barney's ear, and he fell heavily to the floor, totally unconscious. Fortunately, it was a one-barrel pistol, and he could only use it as a club on Ronan, who was desperately engaged with Boney.

As his club descended on his foeman's head, the man caught it in his mighty grasp, and tore it from Beverly's grasp; then, stepping back, he raised it aloft with both hands, and, ravening like a tiger uncaged, he flew at Ronan to fell him. Quick as a flash, the supple blacksmith sprang forward inside the sweep of the weapon, and

struck, with all his force and precision, square on the nose of the snorting Colossus. Blood oozed under the impact of his clenched fist, and the pain filled the hairy thug's eyes with blinding tears. As he turned half round to brace his broad feet for another attack, the clenched knuckles of Ronan's left hand met his ear, with a thud that knocked him over a stool into a corner.

Now the wild delight of his fierce Saxon ancestry thrilled through Beverly's pulsing arteries. Forty generations of Vikings woke in him, and the spume of the North Sea stung his face. The aurora<sup>1</sup> glow kindled in his eyes; his thews, toughened at the resounding anvil, his hardened muscles, that had humbled many a snorting stallion at his smithy, were all in action now.

As Marley's pistol butt cut a gash over his eye, he lifted the Major bodily, and flung him against a carven panel, and, twisting a leg from the upturned table, turned to meet the gigantic enemy, who was on his feet, cursing and raving, as he leaped at him again. Beverly measured the distance, lifted his mace, and would have ended the tall yokel's career then and there, but for the witch, who had joined the fray, and caught Beverly's lifted cudgel as his brawny antagonist bore down upon him.

In vain the bulky foe essayed to fling him. Blow after blow Ronan smashed into his face, with sounding thwacks, till it seemed a mass of bleeding pulp; but grimly he wrestled, with labored breath, the veins of his face standing out like tense cords, until Marley jerked Ronan's feet



from under him; and down the struggling mass thundered to the floor, shaking the house with the shock.

As he fell, Beverly knew they meant to kill him, for Marley's hand was at his throat. One thought rushed through his brain, "What will become of Barbara?"

As it swept over him like a galvanic shock, he rose, towering in magnificent prowess, shook them off, tutened all his splendid sinews, and threw both his iron fists, one after the other, into Boney's purple-welted visage. Then he flung the soldier from him, and, leaping on the tall desperado like a panther, bore him backward through the open door to the porch, which tottered under the grappling contestants. Blow on blow, relentless, staggered the fellow, until, bewildered by the storm of fierce, straight-shouldered facers, he caught at the pillar of the portico to gather strength under the remorseless hammering.

The Major was malleting Ronan's skull with his pistol, and, feeling his strength swooning from him, Beverly caught Marley by the collar, and throwing himself against Boney, clinging to the post, he bore all his weight against the railing—and over into the river, dragging column and rail, went the three fighters.

Few men could swim like Ronan, and he felt his chances would be better in the deep. Under the water, the brute instinct of self-preservation overcame the lust for blood, the combatants separated, and rose to the surface, some yards apart.

The swift current bore them rapidly away. Neither of the abductors could swim, and Ronan now witnessed a fearful tragedy. Boney still clung to the slender column of the balcony which he had torn loose, and, as it drifted by, Marley caught at it.

The blacksmith, treading water at a safe distance, waited for a chance to attack them, one by one. The moon had risen, and, by its soft glow, hill and river were faintly illumined. As the swirling eddy swept them far from the bank toward the open channel, the malefactors were face to face with death by drowning.

The post might have supported two expert swimmers who knew how to keep low in the water; but these men, in peril of death, did what all inexperienced people do, they tried to climb out of the water on the wood. It sank beneath them, and they saw it would only save one. Nature's first law trampled down all human pity and fellow feeling.

"Let go!" screamed Boney. "I had it first. Let go! Let go, I tell you!"

Marley had a death-grip on the floating timber, and said:

"I can't swim! I won't drown. Let go yourself!"

The auburn-haired reprobate was now a fiend incarnate. Down his bruised and mangled face blood and water trickled.

A small piece of railing was nailed to the post. He twisted it off, and raised it, menacingly, at the other.

"Let go, blast ye!" and down it fell on the hapless swimmer's poll, knocking it under water. As Marley emerged, unconscious, Ronan, swimming near by, heard the bludgeon fall again on his unprotected head, and as the helpless man clenched the post in his last agony, the club fell on his clinging fingers, smashing them, until they relaxed, and, with a bubbling groan, the despairing man went down to sleep in the mud forever.

By this time the foes were abreast of the city of P——, and the farrier, weak and bleeding, but somewhat refreshed by the cool water, struck out for the shore. He made a landing under the lee of a houseboat, and was creeping to the bank, when a dog flew out at him. He drove him off, until a man came out in answer to his "halloo."

"Maje, shet up! Ye egg-suckin' whelp! Shet yer haid, d'ye hyar? Hello, stranger; what's up? Tildy, come hyar, quick; hyar's a feller in trouble."

In a few words the bleeding preacher told the tale, and was ready to lead the town marshal, who was found by the boatman, to the island. In half an hour four men were landed there.

"I am fearful poor Barney is dead; he fell like an ox at that pistol shot," said Ronan, as they approached the house.

But Foley was not dead. It was a glancing shot, and plowed his scalp, paralyzing him for some time; but he was ministering to Barbara when they arrived.

"Arrah, Bev, me boy; are ye alive? God be praised! I'm glad to see ye. Glory be! but ye're

the jewel! Ye have saved Miss Lawson from far worse than death."

The officers arrested the old crone and the boy. Barney, Ronan, and Barbara went to a hotel to rest and regain strength. When some strips of court-plaster shut Ronan's wounds on the head, and Foley's scalp was bandaged, they were little the worse for the fray.

But it was twenty-four hours before Barbara could tell the story of her capture, and start home to Delhurst.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### Laura McLaw as a Leader

WHEN Beverly and Barbara started home from P—, leaving Barney to revisit Folly Island and secure the buried money, they were in a happy frame of mind. Though both were exhausted after the trying experiences of the last two days, they felt that the father, on hearing the whole story, would relent and favor their mutual attachment with his approval.

Little they knew of the distressing interpretation put on their absence, or the chilling reception awaiting them. The perfect weather aided their full recovery as they rode up the winding road along the river bank. The night had sprinkled jewels of dew on every leaf. The savor of life was in the sharp wind which lifted the haze from the lowlands. The sunshine, in dazzling floods, sifted through the vermilion-colored woods, which were carpeted with penciled leaves and strewn ankle-deep with many-colored foliage. Corpulent pumpkins lay yellow amid the shocks of ripened maize; purple fox-grapes hung in clusters overhead; ripe persimmons, like luscious rubies honied by the fierce kiss of the north wind, swung temptingly near. The pods of the milkweed unraveled their silken floss on the breeze, and a woodpecker

on the top of a blasted tree in the deadening called, in strident staccato, to a lonely hawk, which flapped along the woodland's edge as they rolled by.

It was almost high noon when they drove up to Barbara's home, and her mother rushed to the gate to meet her. They were enfolded in each other's arms, weeping for joy, when a hoarse cry was heard, and Mr. Lawson, furious with hatred, came running toward them.

"Get out of here!" he cried, almost screaming.

"Father!" she cried, and ran toward him; but he flung her off ruthlessly.

"Do n't call me father, you shameless hussy! You are no daughter of mine! Get off this place at once!"

"What do you mean, father?" cried Barbara, in terror. "What have I done, to be cast off?"

The look on his face stabbed her like a dagger. "You know well what you have done. I never want to see you again, or the hound you have married. I will rule this house!"

"Married, father! We are not married!"

Lawson and his wife fully believed they had eloped, and the two days and nights together were explained by this theory. But the words, "We are not married!" frightened the mother. She looked at her daughter in a dazed way.

Their effect on the father was awful. As his daughter's fancied shame flashed over his soul, deep furrows grew between his maniacal eyes, and a cry escaped him like the howl of a death-struck beast.

Leaping into the house, he brought out his

shotgun, cocked it, and, with a curse, leveled it at the man who, as he supposed, had ruined his daughter's character, and pulled the trigger. Happily his wife had, that morning, taken the caps from the tubes of both barrels. or murder had been done. Swinging the clubbed weapon, he dashed at Ronan, who was still faint and trembling from the terrible struggle on the island.

Beverly threw up his arm to fend away the stroke; but the descending gunstock dashed down his attempted guard, and smote him heavily, breaking with a snap, as it met his skull. The air turned red, the top of his head throbbed, his eyes saw floating spots of flame, and his ears roared as he fell to the sod.

"Lie there, and die!" Lawson shouted, foaming at the mouth.

"Father! What have you done this for? Are you insane?"

"Yes, I am," he answered, stonily. "This good-for-nothing cur took away my one dear lamb, that I had raised and petted, and brought her brazenly back without a marriage certificate. I hope he is dead, doubly dead, dead in the second death!"

It seemed he was killed; for he stirred not. Blood flowed from the reopened wounds in his head, and his eyes were set. His hands clutched convulsively at the grass; but he made no sound. A man ran for the doctor, and two or three knelt by Ronan, vainly trying to help him. Only a segment of the white of the eyeballs showed through the slits in the almost closed lids.

"Now," said the lawyer, roughly, to his child,

"I have fixed him so that he will ruin no more households! You pass out that gate, and never enter it again. Go at once. Do you hear?"

A gleam of light was dawning on Mrs. Lawson.

"Husband, be calm, and let her speak."

"Too late to speak now," snarled the lawyer.

"I never want to hear her voice again. I have nursed a viper to sting me."

"Father," said Barbara, "there is a frightful mistake here. Do you think I eloped with Beverly?"

"Yes, of course. Do you deny it?" he howled.

"I do, solemnly. I was attacked in my room on my return from the festival, chloroformed, and kidnaped by two men I never saw before. I was hurried in a carriage to an island in the river, where Dr. Deynell's gang have a rendezvous. It was done at his instigation; and Beverly had nothing to do with it."

Lawson staggered. "But—but you came home with him?" he huskily muttered.

"Yes, I did," she went on. "Mr. Ronan and Barney, 'the Minty,' by chance saw me borne unconscious to the den of Deynell's henchmen, and risked their lives to save me. Mr. Ronan was almost killed by the robbers, trying to save your only daughter. He brought me home to-day, as soon as I was able to travel, proud to restore your child to your arms unharmed; and now he lies there! Father, look at him! Poor, dear Beverly!" And she knelt by him and kissed his pale face over and over again.

"O Beverly, speak!" she begged. "Speak!"



Lawson's face, as the full truth blazed on him, was ghastly in its anguish. With visage distorted and ashen-hued, he turned to his wife, sobbing: "O mother, what have I done! I am deranged! God forgive me for this day's work! I shall go mad! mad! mad! I know I shall!"

Kneeling beside the prostrate blacksmith, he tenderly lifted him in his arms, bore him into the house, and laid him upon his own bed. Brushing back the hair dabbled with blood, he said, beseechingly:

"Beverly, speak, forgive me before you die! Speak once, just once!"

But Ronan was done with human speech. Unconscious as a stone he lay, and the doctor shook his head sadly as he looked at him:

"There is scarcely one chance in a hundred for him, I fear. But his superb physique may pull him through."

Lawson besought Ronan's parents to let him remain in his house; but the father gruffly refused, and pushed him aside.

"I have a notion to wring your dastardly neck for this, you senseless barbarian," said he. "If my boy dies, I will settle this score in full. Mark that, and prepare for it!"

Not even Barbara's pleading could coax the irate farrier to leave him there; and four friends bore the pallid sufferer on a litter to the Ronan cottage at the cross-roads.

No sound came from the smithy for a week, for his life trembled in the balance; but the prayers of Barbara and his mother were not unheard. The

unwearying nursing and medical skill from three towns slowly edged him away from the open grave, around which he crawled for a fortnight. His life was saved, and one afternoon, when the fever was all gone, and he lay pale and half conscious, he heard that voice that could draw him from the very gates of death calling his name. He looked up into Barbara's face with a sad smile. He was not able to return her tender words; but each day made him a little braver and stronger, and soon the village folk were gladdened by the news that Beverly was slowly climbing back to health again.

The children stopped, when going home from school, to ask about him; and all the country round was concerned for his recovery.

Each day Miss Lawson, grave and dignified, greatly solemnized by the late exciting events, hovered around him. The touch of her hands sent fire through his veins, and the vital spark in the youthful athlete soon burned steadily as of yore.

When he was able to sit up, the first visitor admitted was Barney, who shook his hand eagerly. "The Minty's" head still showed the scar of his wound; and he had told the whole story, word for word, to Mr. Lawson, who was in abject grief over his uncontrollable attack on his daughter's defender.

"Good mornin', Bev," said "the Minty." "The heavens was hung wid black since I saw ye last; but the sun is out wance more. You'll soon be right agin, tubbe shure, an' we'll be merry as grigs."

"How are you getting on, Barney?" asked the clergyman.

"Foine, considerin' how Deynell's deputy rapped me wid de pellet o' lead. Bad 'cess to the whole huddle o' mud-atin' lizards. One o' the pair that heeled over into the wather wid ye is settled. I'd like to mate the ither la-ad, and have a few words wid him."

"I think," said Ronan, "you will never meet him again. He was badly hurt, and the chill of the river, in his spent condition, was, no doubt, fatal. At any rate, I hope he escaped with his life, and will change his mode of getting a living."

Foley asked to be alone an hour with Ronan, and then untied the package of money.

"Here," he said, "is eleven thousand dollars I got out of the hole beyant. What d'ye want me to do wid it? I dinnaw."

"I don't know myself," answered Ronan. "You keep it for awhile, till I am able to disentangle my mind and think straight. Then I will decide what is best. I wonder where it came from."

"As fer that," chuckled "the Minty," "it's as likely to come from one place as another. Small doubt but that housebrakin' crony o' yours burgled it somewhere; but that's nayther here nor there. 'Tis good stuff, and we can't find the rale proprietor now; so we can't."

"If I conclude to keep it, I will use it as Hahn desired—doing good. And you must take part of it, Barney," replied Beverly.

"Me, is it?" quoth "y. "Niver a farthing will I touch."

"But you shall I insist on it. You were nearly slain in the struggle we had with those villains, and must share it with me."

"Well," said Barney, mollified, "ye can give a bit of it to Nora unbeknownst to me, and I'll stand in wid ye in that way. Meanwhile," he added, as he tied the parcel, "I will hould it till ye call fer it. I'm off fer a thrip east wid cattle once more, and whin I return, ye will be yerself agin. Arrah," he said, admiringly, "ye are the darlin', Beverly, to lick that parsel of pirates single-handed, an' me lyin' on the flure. I was no more help to you than a herrin' hung by the gills in a smoky chimbley. More power to your elbow! Now I'll be off wid myself."

When the young convalescent was able to see callers, Lawson, who had sent flowers and fruit every day and game which he had shot for the sick man's table, came in with his daughter to apologize for his untoward actions.

"Mr. Ronan," he said, in a sad tone, "I can't wait longer to ask forgiveness. Foley has recited the Iliad of Folly Island in our home; and mother and I wept as we learned of your valiant struggle to save our only child. My extenuation is this: I was crazed with wrath, and I misjudged you. Some men would never forgive my misdeeds, but you have a hot temper yourself, and know how passion blinds us."

Ronan thought of the blow that felled Sinner McLaw, and said:

"I understand you, sir; and I forgive as I need to be forgiven."

Then he glanced at Barbara, who stood at the window, gazing out.

"Daughter, come here," said Lawson. "Can you forgive me also for the venom I showed toward you and your lover?"

"Yes, my father; I fully forgive you."

He took his child's hand, led her to the bed, and put it in the white palm of the sufferer, kissed her lovingly, and went out like a man who had looked over the edge of time into eternity, and had seen himself through and through.

A few weeks later, when Ronan was almost well, to his home entered Philip Ellis, or Elliott, as we now know him.

"I have come all the way to ask a favor, Mr. Ronan," he explained, when they were alone.

"What is it?" questioned the parson.

"Do you intend to return to Millbank?" the Captain asked.

"No, sir; I never expect to see it again," replied Ronan.

"You remember Sinner McLaw's daughter, Laura?" queried Philip.

"Of course. I can never forget her."

"Well, after you left, she went among the mill-hands during the pestilence, and saved many lives. She rallied the town around her, secured supplies, distributed them, and led the battle against the plague. She became the angel of the 'Lower Bank,' and snatched many from certain death. By her heroic struggles the pest was at last conquered, and health returned once more.

"Then she went back to her home a different

woman, and shortly was taken down with the disease. She had overworked and weakened herself, and it seized upon her reduced vitality. She might have pulled through all right, but the woman showed no desire to recover. 'My work is done,' she says. 'I would rather depart.'

"One day 'Sinner' sent for my wife—"

"Your wife?" queried Ronan.

"Yes. Edith Satterlee is now my wife. We were married not long ago."

"Shake," said Beverly. "You have won a prize in the matrimonial lottery—a grand prize. Such women are few."

"Well," went on Elliott, "when we got to the house, we found Laura wasted to a shadow. You would n't know her. She is so thin and pale."

"Edith and she were schoolmates; and when my wife asked her if there was anything she could do for her, she looked around to see that her father was out of the room, and whispered:

"'Yes; I can not die happy until I see Mr. Ronan.'

"I went out and found McLaw, and told him his daughter was nearly gone. He knew that from the doctors; and I said: 'She wants to see Mr. Ronan before she passes away. Will you permit it?'

"There is a rumor that you and he had some trouble, and I did n't know how he would take the request."

"His voice broke, as he tried to answer, 'I never denied Laura anything she wanted, and can not do so now.'

"I said, 'Ronan would not come to your house unless you invited him.'

"'I will write him, and, if necessary, will go out West for him. In our quarrel I was most to blame. I forgive him, and want him to come at once.'

"'You need not go. I will go,' said I; and he sat down and wrote this letter."

Beverly tore open the envelope, unfolded the sheet, and read:

"THE REV. BEVERLY RONAN:

"DEAR SIR,—My daughter, Laura, who is very sick beyond recovery, desires to see you before the end comes. It would be a great comfort to her, as well as a pleasure to me, if you would visit our home and remain a few days. I will be glad to return the favor when opportunity offers.

"With sincere regard,

"Your friend,

EZRA McLAW."

The clergyman read this missive with mixed feelings, and sat a long while under the spell of thought. Then he said, "I will take a day to decide this matter, and will give you an answer to-morrow."

That evening he related the whole story to Barbara, and asked, "What do you think of it?"

"I would go," said she. "It is your plain duty to go."

When the young divine told Philip he would visit Millbank, he also told him the story of adventure at Folly Island. Elliott asked for a close

description of the two miscreants who attacked him, and said: "I doubt not the smaller of the two was Major Marley, my rival for the hand of Edith. The old Colonel's will was stolen from his room, and I think he did it while stopping at the house. I have suspected for some time that he was in league with the Cave Hill gang, as he was seen several times in the company of Moulton, the grave-robber, whom we captured in the underground den."

"If that surmise is true," replied Beverly, "he will vex you no more; for his career ended in the stream, and I have learned that his companion, who killed him, was none other than Boney Blinn, the redoubtable river bandit, so long hunted by the law."

"You also will have no further trouble from your ambitious enemy."

And he told how the fever-smitten Deynell died in Otter Creek.

When the depressing story was ended, Ronan said solemnly, "Verily, the way of the transgressor is hard."



## CHAPTER XXIV

### A Man Transformed

THE Samaritan of the Jericho Road has even now his progeny; and the one known as Laura McLaw spent many weeks at the work of that good wayfarer, and made a record for kind deeds in Millbank that shines undimmed until this day.

The children of that time are in mid-life now; but they have not ceased to relate the brightest chapter in the depressing annals of that abode of ill-requited toil.

One day she came to her home, saying: "We have stamped out the infection. There has not been a new case in nine days, and all the sick are doing well. Praise the Lord for that!"

"Are you not worn out?" asked her anxious father.

"No, but I am tired," said the daughter of consolation; "and I have come to my own house to rest. I have led them on to victory through the sorrows of life and the terrors of death. And now I am weary, weary," and she cast herself on a sofa.

Little she knew how deep were the words, "I have come home to rest;" for within a month she

was to lie down to the long, long sleep, from which there is no waking.

Next day she was feverish, with lips and hands burning. Every bone ached, all her nerves ran fire, her step faltered.

"I fear," said "Sinner," thoroughly alarmed, "you have contracted the disease by contact with the mill operatives."

"Perhaps I have," she confessed, a gleam of flame in her dark eyes. "But I have had six weeks of rapture. For a month and a half I have known the ecstasy of living. Body, mind, and soul, in triplicate harmony, have walked the way my Master went. If it is best, I will recover and go at it again. If not, all is well. You will not need me long, and no one else cares. If this is the final stroke, Death will find me ready, ready!"

And she sang the familiar verse slowly, sweetly:

"There I shall bathe my weary soul  
In seas of heavenly rest,  
And not a wave of trouble roll  
Across my peaceful breast."

"When God made Laura McLaw," said Brad, at the loom-head in t' big mill, "he was glad all that day; an' he ain't a-goin' to call her away yet."

"Did n't ye hear," said Hi Stiles, "that Doc Rodman said she had hardly no chance at all? Nerves all frazzled out fer lack o' sleep, been livin' in her feelings for forty days and nights."

"Yes," replied the old class-leader, "I heerd it yistiddy; but she belongs to the elect. She's hid

In the cleft o' the Rock, I tell you. Of course, I can't peek into the inscrewtable mysteries of Providence; but if she goes, she is prepared. Her soul is as full of day as heaven is of song."

"That's a fac'," agreed Hi. "An' Millbank ought to build her a lunkin' big monnym-ent, with a statoo of Laura on top of it, with an Irish baby in her arms, an' its arms a-clingin' about her neck."

Bulletins came thrice a day from "Sinner's" house to the factories; and each message was sadder than the last. Unbidden moisture dimmed the eyes that looked toward the house at morning, noon, and night.

At the store on Saturday evening, old Birkey voiced the current opinion when he said, scratching his long, narrow head:

"Fellers, ef that ere gal o' McLaw's quits this vale o' tears, it's just a-goin' to hit this town right where it lives, an' knock it plum daft; ye hear me?"

The clerk let the copious stream of New Orleans molasses drip over the measure on the sanded floor, as he knuckled his eyes, while a slim carder bent like a half-opened jack-knife, and poked the fire. The others looked out the windows in silence for a long while. Even the checker-players on the back counter forgot the half-finished game. Then Whitely said:

"I'll pay fer a gallon o' thet ere new cider ye got to-day, Birkey. Pass it around, an' let every feller hev a pull at it."

It was drunk with few words, and, when finished, he bought a few pounds of soap, a box of paper collars, and went home.

## A Modern Apollos

Ronan and Philip found "Sinner's" home a house of mourning. The father met Beverly with a hearty handshake, and took him aside to whisper, "You must forget the past, Mr. Ronan."

"Not till I beg your forgiveness," he answered.

"Hush! I deserved what I got," confessed the elder man.

"Perhaps you did," said Ronan; "but I have felt like a coward since I was guilty of it. It was a contemptible thing for a minister to do. Now that my blood is cool, I want to adjust the matter by a humble apology. Can I do so?"

"Yes; as you used to say in the pulpit, 'Let the dead past bury its dead.' Come and see my daughter. She has but a few days to live, and is longing to see you."

Beverly was greatly changed by the trying events since he left Millbank; but vastly greater was the change in Laura.

Wasting away in weakness from the fever that drank her blood and left the veins empty, she lay pale and helpless. The hand she put out to him was almost transparent; and he felt the bones shifting in his big, but gentle palm, as he took it. Nothing remained of the beauty of the face, save the wonderful eyes, glowing like living coals, and the stormy hair that hid half her wan forehead. So frail and pathetic she seemed, lying there, an outbound emigrant about to embark, that he bent and kissed her pallid brow.

A smile bathed her lips, and she said:

"It is so good to be strong. Mr. Ronan," she

went on, "I am very, very glad you came. I have counted the slow hours till you arrived."

"I am here because of your request, Laura, and came as soon as I could. I have been very sick myself."

Her eyes searched his face, sadly; then she said, as if her inquiring gaze had refreshed her, "Do you know why I wanted to see you, Beverly?"

"I have heard of your Christian martyrdom, Laura; that you gave your life for others. It is just like you. I know you are ready and willing to depart. No word of mine can aid you; for you were always better than I. No; I do not know why you desired to see me."

"I am very weak. Father will tell you."

Elliott made as if he would leave the room; but "Sinner" requested him to remain.

"My daughter," said McLaw to Ronan, "owns considerable money—about thirty thousand dollars—which I have given her from time to time. The interest she has used in her good deeds. She wants to bequeath it to some permanent benevolent work, and, knowing your love for the lowly, she formed the plan of offering it to you to open a Mission and Refuge for the Friendless in one of our great cities. Will you accept the trust?"

Beverly turned to Laura, and saw a wistful look bent on him.

"I am not competent," he declared. "I have little experience in such work."

"Beverly," whispered the dying one. "Do not deny me this request—my last one!"

He said: "I will consent to use the funds as Miss Lawson directs. I will do my best."

Sinner asked Philip to go for his wife, while he himself went for his lawyer. Soon Laura's will was written. Mr. and Mrs. Elliott signed it as witnesses. And the fading woman sank into mental quietude, waiting for the great change.

About an hour before morning, Beverly was awakened, and, with the others, went to her room. The end had come. Death dignifies every face, even the meanest. But on this noble countenance a radiance as from an unseen lamp was shining. All the former beauty had returned to the features, pain had vanished, a tender smile hovered about the lips. The father held her hand as the breath failed. She was unconscious; yet the eyes went once around the room caressingly, then the eyelids closed, a shadow as of an invisible veil dropped down upon the calm brow; and all was over.

No one, not even the physician by the bed, knew the precise moment of departure; so peaceful was her dismissal.

McLaw asked Ronan to remain and preach the funeral sermon, which he was glad to do. The Millbank church never held so many people, nor such evidences of sorrow, as at her funeral. A quartet of girls from the mills, whom she had trained, sang "Rock of Ages;" and Ronan's prayer was a cry from the depths, bewailing the people's loss. His sermon was profound in its chaste beauty, every word winnowed, every thought mellowed. He unfolded her character

with such subtle insight that it seemed to bud and grow and open like the rose of dawn, till the dull room glowed with a mystical light, reflected on every face.

Once he stopped his measured accent; his voice broke. Looking back, he saw that night of temptation when, hand in hand with her, he stooped to pluck the nettles that grow on the rim of hell. A look of triumph came over his face, and his voice rose like a trumpet, as he said, in Mrs. Browning's exultant words:

"I smile to think God's greatness  
Flows around our incompleteness  
Round our restlessness his rest."

The factories were all closed, and a long procession followed the hearse to the burial-ground. When the coffin was lowered, the poor people of the Lower Bank came to the grave and cast in broken sprays of cedar; and not one branch but was gemmed with tears of the lowly toilers. The very last was a washerwoman, who led two ragged boys up to the opening in the earth, looked sorrowfully into it, and said, shaking her head:

"We 'll niver see the likes o' her agin. Whin little Brian an' Mary were down wid the plague an' needed me, she did me washin' three times wid her own hands. God rest her sweet sowl!"

That night one would have thought the town disheartened; and the people in every cottage, from the store at the hill-front to the tavern at the crest, talked reminiscently of her many virtues.

The Church people pressed Ronan to remain

over Sunday. He was eager to get back to Barbara, who was sewing on her wedding dress; but when the old pastor implored him to stay, he consented.

People went two hours early to get seats; and all agreed Ronan had developed greatly. All the fine play of fancy and flashes of imagery were there, and the warmth of natural affection as well; but there was a solemnity and holy fear in his tones, new to them. He touched some strings in that harp called the human soul he had never vibrated before.

This was especially manifest at the evening service. In closing, he said:

"I owe this good people gratitude for many acts of kindness and love; but you see I only have the old, old message—the story ever new."

During the last hymn, the local pastor, sitting behind him, whispered:

"Give the people a chance to make a profession of faith. Many are ready."

When the song was ended, Ronan stood an instant, surveyed the assembly, and said, slowly:

"It is very likely we will never meet again. I will therefore open the doors of the Church to any one who desires to lead a Christian life. Let such rise and come to the altar, and meet me."

No one stirred. He asked them to sing the Doxology; and, when it ceased, he lifted his hands to give the benediction. Before he could speak, a voice said:

"Wait!"

He saw a movement near the door, and, to



## A Man Transformed

319

his amazement, McLaw came up the aisle. His face was grim and his gait unsteady, as one groping in a blur. Slowly he made his way through the astounded crowd, and knelt at the rail. Some of the curious visitors looked alarmed; but a knot of old Methodists fired up in a moment, seeing a sinner slain of the Lord.

The noble chant,

*"There 's a wideness in God's mercy,  
Like the wideness of the sea,"*

rose over the swaying mass like a white gull above the yeasting ocean waves.

Ronan knelt with him, rejoicing exceedingly. He knew that this strange man, having once put his hand to the plow, would never look back.

The people sang as never before. Hymn after hymn rolled forth, while anxious saints labored with the man under conviction.

He seemed to hear little they said or sung, but moaned in spiritual distress.

"Come," cried Ronan, "gather round, and see a mystery. The spirit in a death-grapple with the flesh. Soon it will be unprisoned, manumitted, freed. Sing again," he called to Brother Stites, whose face was a beaming bowl of joy, with freckles floating on it. "Keep 'Happy Day' ready. We won't leave this house till this soul sees the light."

One beside McLaw asked him how he felt.

"O," said the crushed rebel, "I have wasted my life; but I want to save my soul. I want a chance beyond."

The worker told him to pray; but he didn't know how. A gray-haired woman kneeled and listened to his strong cry, "God help me!"

"Mr. McLaw," she pleaded, "say this, believing. Repeat the words after me, and put your soul into each one: 'O God, for Jesus' sake, forgive me!'"

The man began, slowly, fearfully. At the word "Jesus" he stopped. The prayer was never finished. He raised his wet face, all glowing like sunshine through rain, and essayed to get on his feet, then fell under the overwhelming thought of salvation.

Soft and low a voice began the strain:

"'Tis done; the great transaction's done,  
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

While half the people wept for excess of happiness, the other half shook hands in spontaneous delight; and one whispered, "I wish Laura was here;" and the reply was, "Who knows but she is?"

When "Happy Day" had swelled to the rafters, and rattled the sash in the weatherbeaten casements, the folks departed; but McLaw and Ronan, walking homeward arm in arm, could hear snatches of hymns resounding along the darkened roads. The old man stopped once to listen, and said:

"I know now what that means. I never knew before. How good the people are!"

After they were refreshed with a cup of tea and some fruit, they sat talking in the house a long

## A Man Transformed

321

while. All the dour sullenness had left McLaw, and Ronan marveled at his blithe, jocund spirits. He truly was transformed, and seemed inclined to unlock his memory, and open up the distant past.

"You do not know, Mr. Ronan, nor does any mortal, what a load I have carried for thirty years. I believe it would aid me in my new life if I unburdened myself to you. I am a man with a dreadful history. Would you listen to it?"

"Gladly," said the preacher. "You will need help on the King's highway, and I can give it better if I know your affliction."

"Well," began the elder man, with the air of one about to strip the pall from a dead face, "I will disclose my secret. I was born in Scotia, and when a man of thirty was a gamekeeper on a large estate in the Highlands, near Loch Lomond. There occurred the incident that made me as hard as a stone, and began my career which earned me, because of my unfeeling manner and unsocial nature, the name, 'Sinner' McLaw. I deserved it, and never resented it; for it seemed a kind of lawful brand burned on my brow for a past misdeed. I even used it when speaking of myself. Little the people of Millbank knew how terribly true was my peculiar title, 'Sinner.' It seemed a piece of poetic justice sent by the Deity for my transgression. So I accepted it, as the devotee accepts the thorny scourge that flogs him in penance for his sin. My heart was like a piece of slag, and I became a mere dollar-trap, to catch money and keep it. But I wander from my text.

"I fell madly in love with the daughter of the head gamekeeper, and thought I could win her. I was strong, and feared no man. She was pious, quiet, and as lovely a blossom as ever grew among the heather. She had not promised to be my wife, nor can I really say she greatly favored me; but I won her smiles, and felt I was liked better than any suitor in all the country side. I was determined to win her, and would have sold myself into slavery for her sake.

"In the fall of the year, a party of gentlemen came up from Edinboro for the grouse-shooting, on invitation of the landowner. One of them, a bright, high-spirited man, had the good luck to save the young lady from hurt in a runaway accident, and he became enamored of her. I thought he was only flirting with the country maid, and would forget her when he went away; but the lass loved him—and soon I saw I was forgotten. Perhaps I showed some ill will toward him, and one day we met in the forest—he had strayed some distance from his friends, and I was guarding a deer-path, waiting for the staghounds. Anger flamed in my brain, and I lusted for vengeance. I stepped before him, and said:

"'Halt, sir! You have stolen my chosen maid—my sweetheart—with your buttered lies! You mean to wrong her, I think. Tell me, is this true?'

"'Your sweetheart,' he said, with a sneer. 'She would n't wipe her shoes on a hind like you. Out of my way, you underling, or I'll stretch you cold!'

"You will not, my fine city fop," said I. "She was mine before she was yours; and unless you are man enough to battle for her, you may not have her."

"His mettle was up, and he said: 'I'll fight you now, and here. Step twenty paces from me, and count three; on the word, fire! and I will bide the issue.'"

"Nothing loath, for I was foaming with rage; and he, being proud of his markmanship, was ready. We measured the distance, leveled our guns, and, at the word 'three,' blazed away. The feather was cut from my Glengarry cap, and the tip of an ear cut off by the buckshot—ye can see the place here." And McLaw bent to show the maimed ear. "But my rival fell heavily to earth, with blood streaming from his neck. My wrath was soon gone, as I saw him writhing there, and I tried to lift him."

"His companions, hearing the two shots—which were like one—came toward him, and I, in great fear, fled into the thicket. His blood was on my hands as I hid there; and when they found him, I heard one ask him what was wrong; but I could not hear his reply; but soon one called to the others to come, because Alex had shot himself. The brave fellow lied to save me, and, feebly, said his gun had caught in the brush and hurt him."

"They said he would die soon unless they got him to a house, and one raced to the castle for a physician, while the others bore him to a cotter's hut near by. I hung about till night, as near as I dared, and, about midnight, the doctor came out,

saying: 'Send for his people at once. I doubt if he will see the morning.'

"Knowing I was a murderer, I fled to Greenock, and got a Clyde steamer for America. Since then I have been a morose being. Afraid of my fellow-men, Laura was my only comfort, and now she is taken away. I felt God was driving me to restitution, and, while you preached, I said, 'I will go back to Scotland, and suffer for my sin. I will be right with God's law and man's law, for they are both righteous altogether.' So I went to the altar, and soon I will be crossing the sea. No one will care, and I will make full atonement."

A look of solemn peace chastened his wrinkled face, and his homeliness was almost beautiful in its calm amenity. After long repression, his soul was jubilant. It was the coronation hour.

"I can but die," he said. "I will be quick to do it, and wash out the crime."

How majestic is the Spirit when the laureation of absolute righteousness hallows it!

"How strange a recital!" mused Ronan. "What was your foeman's name?"

"Lawson," replied McLaw; "Alexander Lawson."

"Of Aberdeen?" queried the clergyman.

"That is the town he hailed from."

"Was he a lawyer?"

"He was a young barrister, which is the identical thing."

"Listen to me, Ezra McLaw. Listen, and talk fast. Was the woman's name Janet?"

"It was."

"Janet McCrea?"

"No other; how did ye know all this?"

Ronan was leaping for joy. He caught the old man, and hugged him.

"This all happened," he cried, "on the estate of the Duke of —?"

"The very demesne. Tell me, Ronan, what you mean? Are you going mad?"

"I mean this. You are not a murderer. Alex Lawson lives, and I know him well. I have seen the scar in his neck, and heard him tell the tale in his home in Delhurst. His life hung by a hair for weeks after you winged him; but he recovered, married Janet, and came to America, where he has grown rich."

McLaw was sobbing like a child. "Can this be true? and am I not a murderer? O, if Laura could see me now!"

"Who knows but she does see you?" spake the preacher. "You must go to Delhurst, and see Lawson and your old flame. What a meeting that will be! I want to witness it."

"That will I do!" cried McLaw. "And the sooner the better. Either the world around me is changed, or I am another man."

"The change is within, Ezra," quietly answered the clergyman. "The stars in their courses fought against you all the years of your concealed sin; now you are keeping step to the music of the cosmos. All the universe is friendly to him who doeth righteousness and showeth mercy."

Next day they sped westward, and the train, which shook the track with the tread of its whirling chariots, went all too slow for the old man in his new-found happiness, and the younger one hurrying to his beloved—for the nuptial-day was drawing nigh.



## CHAPTER XXV

### A Monetary Panic

WITH the melancholy death of Dr. Deynell, all the commercial fabric which he had built fell into irremediable chaos; for knavery was the keystone of every arch, in all the various concerns which carried on business in his name, and he had been teetering on the edge of failure for a year. The ruin was entire, and the subsequent distress far-reaching. To do him simple justice, the scheming cheat did not intend to rob the poor, nor did he do so directly—more than once he refused to invest the money of widows and aged folks in his top-heavy companies—but indirectly, though he flattered himself that misery was never made more hopeless by him, this was the effect of his double dealings, for he decoyed into his net those who held trust funds, and thus pulled down, in widespread disaster, many necessitous people whose faces he never saw.

One of the men he had inveigled, by intricate *finesse*, into his ventures, was Alex Lawson, the banker of Delhurst. The physician's dazzling financial success and oily tongue had cozened the foreign-born holder of the village savings, until he risked nearly all his own available hoard, and all

that was loaned to him, in the hope of immense gain from high interest and growing value of shares in the rotten corporations. Too often are the people in every State shocked to discover that men with records of monetary success are, at times, as purblind as the veriest clown.

When the news of the doctor's final overthrow, and the mercantile calamity following it, reached the western community, where a few people knew the bond between Deynell and Lawson, it caused a panic at once. Though it was evening when the papers arrived, the bad news flew from lip to lip, and ere the curfew many hearts were heavy; and Lawson, who had hid the matter from his family entirely, passed a sleepless night.

He was of a nervous temperament, and anticipations of the morrow racked him. Hour by hour the tension increased, until the room, where he usually slept alone, seemed peopled with fiends, all bent on torturing him. He thought of what he would say in the morning, and what would be said to him. In vain he wooed coy slumber, or tried to think on other themes; back into that horrible rut the wheels of his brain dropped; and when the midnight came, his brain was so disordered that no maxims of philosophy, no concentration of will, were efficacious in securing a single moment's sleep. The bed seemed to draw him in three directions at once, the covering, all through the leaden hours, was either too heavy or too light; and when morning stole through the shutters, he was verily as tired as a dog.

A thousand excuses he made, and not one ex-

tenuated his folly; while his nerves seemed to spread in a delicate network outside his skin, and shiver in naked helplessness. Groans broke from the burdened man, when he thought of the indigent whose small accumulations were all engulfed. His own beggary was the least of his woes. He thought of the envelope he sent every Saturday morning to Grandma Hilton, which spelled all the comforts of a modest home to the aged woman. It would be sent no more; and the almshouse would receive the kindly old soul, whose annuity he had allowed to be lost, because the principal was swallowed up.

Visions of angry river-men, raftsmen, coalmen, firemen, swarmed about him; of cripples and aged, dependent and helpless, whose only anchor against the reefs of pauperism was now broken. He saw a widow, whose husband had left in his hands a sum which represented the pinching accumulations of a laborious life. Like a double house builded together, when one is torn down, the other must be braced, when death took away the worn-out gardener, he fondly believed that the fund he left would support his aged wife till the summons came to her. Her hopeless countenance looked on accusingly as he arose to dress, and a glance in the mirror showed that his eyes were staring and bloodshot.

The sun was rising redly over the hills as he descended to the breakfast, saying, "I must steel myself to-day for stern duty." He spoke the usual greetings in a husky voice, and tried in vain to eat. Swallowing his coffee, he retired to the liv-

ing-room to await the gathering of his family. When they came, he was pacing the room, with glaring eyes and clenched hands, muttering incoherently.

His wife saw his livid face, and asked, "What is wrong, Alex; are you ill?"

With painful gestures, as if he already felt the isolation of the dishonor he had brought on his wife and child, he essayed to speak. He stood like a person expecting an attack from his loved ones, whom he had disgraced. He made the motions of a hapless bather in the ocean, entangled in seaweeds, which enmeshed him closer at every effort to escape. He was gyved, and sinking into the disreputable class who live by the spoliation of their fellow-men.

"Shut the door," he whispered, hoarsely. "Sit down, Janet and Barbara, and hear my misdeeds. I have ruined myself and you, and many others."

"How is this, my husband? I will not believe anything wrong of you!" cried the wife.

"I will stand by you against the world!" echoed the daughter.

"I know that," he replied; "but I am undone. I trusted nearly all of my assets to Deynell, and everything is whelmed in the maelstrom of his downfall."

For some moments they sat stunned, utterly crushed. His hard breathing only was heard.

"We are stripped of everything," he went on, with the glare of insanity in his eyes; "even this house is not mine. My creditors will take all; nothing is left."

Barbara put her arms about him, saying: "Bear up, father; be brave. We are all strong, and I will drudge to support you. I can earn a living."

"But O!" he cried, with a wild laugh, "I am a liar! a thief! a robber! Where is my family honor gone? I was well born; I inherited a stainless name. I have befouled my birth, and sullied the Lawson escutcheon; tarnished a proud record, and even degraded my own family. God help me now! There is nothing left for me but poison, or the river!" And the broken man wept: if his heart was cleft in twain.

"But you did not intend to wrong any one; that is one consolation," said the wife.

"True," moaned the bankrupt; "but the effect on others is the same as if I was a conscienceless swindler. They will think I deliberately gulled them."

A knocking, loud and rapid, was heard upon the door.

"Come in!" called the banker; and the storekeeper entered, with a lawyer and a notary public.

Direct was his speech. "Mr. Lawson, is our lodge money lost in the Deynell failure?"

"It is all gone," answered the humbled man, who yesterday would have resented such a tone.

"Well," said the merchant, "as the money to sustain our needy members was in your hands, as treasurer of the society, you should try to secure them against loss, at least."

"How can I do so?" queried the financier.

"By assigning your property to us, as trustees, at once," spake the storekeeper.

"I am not willing to give some of my creditors all that I have left; but will gladly give up all I have as a debtor, if all can share alike. Mr. Blundell, I know you to be an honorable man, as is also your friend, Mr. Martin. Will you two legally receive my possessions, to be equally distributed in due time among those whom I owe?"

"We will," they both replied.

"Draw up the instruments, Mr. Barker;" and in an hour he had assigned his home, three farms, his bank, and several lots in the town, being all he had of any value in the world.

A crowd was in the yard by this time. Men and women, with glassy eyes and rigid faces. The solid earth rocking beneath their feet would not have surprised them more than this catastrophe. The lawyer informed the maddened multitude that Lawson had surrendered his all, which would be duly divided. With suppressed curses and tearful faces they scattered to their darkened homes.

Within the banker's home, the sorrow was indescribable. Reason seemed to forsake the head of the house, who locked himself in his room, saying no word to any one.

A lady named Bailey, who lived not far away, pleaded for an interview with him, and was admitted to his room, where he paced back and forth in tempestuous mood.

"Mr. Lawson," she began, "is it true that all my money is lost?"

"Sadly, bitterly true," he moaned. "All is gone. I meant to have benefited you, and have beggared you! Spare me your reproaches, woman; I will

lose my judgment! Wait till I am calmer! Have mercy on me!"

"O, sir," she wailed, "what will we do now? I must tell you one thing you never suspected. You know about Elsie, my crippled girl; and Harry, at school; but you do not know the sad fate of my son, Louis. He was my mainstay until he went west. He fell into bad company, and, in a quarrel, killed a man. He is now in jail for life. No one here knows this but myself and Mr. Ronan. You remember, when he was tried for passing bad money, there was three days' absence, after he left college and before he came home, which he could not explain. He was visiting the Governor of that Western State, trying to save my boy, who was condemned to be hanged. He, by strong beseeching, got his sentence changed to imprisonment for life. In order to tell where he was at that time, he must expose our shame, which would kill my sick daughter; so he hid his errand, and saved us. This helped to send him to prison, though he was innocent, as we all learned afterward. Now, you see my predicament. Harry must come home from college, only half trained, and support us, and Elsie will grieve away what little strength she has. It means an early grave for her when she knows our loss. All I had was committed to you. Can you not give me at least part of it; I need it so much."

Nervously the banker pushed his fingers through his hair, and in strained accents cried: "How happy would I be to do so, Mrs. Bailey; but I have turned over my entire belongings—the mak-

ings of thirty toilsome years—to my creditors. I am poorer than you this moment. See," he said, as he took out his purse, "I have fifty dollars left—not another penny—and I give you forty of it. You will get a share of my estate—perhaps twenty-five cents on the dollar. I can do no more. Forgive me! Ask Elsie to forgive me!" he begged, as the bowed woman went out.

In the hall she met the postmaster, a pushing young politician, greatly agitated. He shoved past her, and forced his way into the parlor, where the guilty man was, locking the door after him.

"Lawson," he questioned, with menace in every word, "what is this I hear? I want my money, and forthwith, this very day. Can I have it?"

"I regret you can not," was the reply.

"I can't, hey?" he howled. "By the eternal, I'll see if I can't. That money belongs to Uncle Sam, and I'll be expelled from office if I do n't produce it. Will you give it up?"

"It is beyond my power, Walker. You ask what is impossible. It can not be done."

With a wolfish snarl, the official drew a gleaming dirk from his breast, and muttered, as he advanced on Lawson, "I'll cut your devilish wizen, you undermining son of perdition; I'll murder you right here!"

The banker quailed not under the awful imprecations, but stood erect. "Very well, John Walker; strike, if you think it will mend matters. Strike! Here is my heart," he said, as he threw his coat open. "Life is nothing to me now! Kill me; your dagger is the key that will set me free!



Drive the blade deep, man; it will be a welcome release. Strike, and spare me not!"

The creditor stopped and faced him; but the wrongdoer flinched not. There was no shrinking; evidently he welcomed death as an easy door out of his accumulated woes. The assailant put up his weapon, and declared, with vile words: "I will not do it. I will let you live, you rascally unscrupulous thief, to wear stripes in the penitentiary. You are on the road now, safe enough. I would n't be in your boots for all you have stolen, you infernal, offal!"

He went out nursing his wrath, and the brow-beaten offender sank again into a chair. The very marrow of his bones was cold; his soul was drinking fen-water and eating adders' flesh; upon him blazed the world's intolerable scorn.

The wife and daughter, trying to compose their thoughts, did not see him slip out at the end of the short afternoon, and walk quickly toward the river. The boat from down stream was coming to the wharfboat, and the half-crazed man thought of flying from the place. Some of his creditors from towns below were hurrying to see him. One of them, a square-built cattleman, rushed at him furiously.

"Lawson!" he shouted, "I want my money; d'ye hyar?"

"I have no money, Mr. Gregory. I am a bankrupt. I have nothing, and own nothing."

"That's a lie, you villainous bank-wrecker! Shell out something to make me good, or I'll choke the juggling soul out of ye!"

"You can't get blood out of a gatepost, Gregory," replied the defaulter. "I tell you, I am penniless."

With a rattle of oaths, the drover seized a club from a heap of cordwood near the gangplank, and rushed upon the banker, bringing the cudgel down on his skull with a heavy crash. Lawson reeled, and fell backward into the tawny stream, and was swept between the wharf and the big steamboat, which was a side-wheeler. Some of the witnesses of the tragic occurrence ran to the stern of the boat, and looked through the falling night; but he was not seen, nor did he appear when the craft moved off. He was gone.

The news of his drowning reached his family early in the evening, and was absolutely numbing in its awful impact. Dry-eyed grief tore the widow's soul, while Barbara wept herself into a stupor, until she was in a condition of physical collapse. The doctor said brain-fever would be upon her unless her anguish was stayed. Half the black night they talked, bemoaning the fact that Mr. Lawson's body could not be recovered and decently buried.

"I could wish," said the dispirited wife, "that another day might never dawn."

Soon a strong desire seized her to leave Delhurst forever.

"I can never face the neighbors; their sneers will stab me. Let us go to my native land, away from this scene, and never return more."

The thought seemed to revivify her. "We have nothing here. I own a few hundred dollars, which

he gave me." And again she broke into wailing. "Woe is me, a sorrowful woman! Let us go back to Scotland, and find peace among old friends, who do not know our trouble."

"What will Beverly say to find me gone?" sighed Barbara.

"He will say it is best; you will only drag him down by a marriage now. No minister could assume such a burden. The daughter of a defaulter, killed by an outraged client, would only hinder him as a wife. He has suffered enough. Let us not draw him into our abasement. If you can not dignify him, depart from him. No Church would want you in its manse."

"Be it so, mother. You are right. I will pluck out my heart, and go hence, rather than disgrace him. Let us make ready."

As the home and all its contents belonged to the hungry creditors, the mother and daughter refusing to see any one, sadly busied themselves all day in packing their personal belongings; and, saying farewell to a few, took the up-river boat, at five o'clock in the evening, on the way to Janet Lawson's far-off home in a foreign land.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### The Flight to Scotland

**N**O hint of the remarkable changes in Delhurst reached Ronan till he stepped, with McLaw, from the train at the station, nine miles away, and climbed into the familiar coach. There the Jehu met him, with the question, "Have you heard the news, Beverly?"

"What news, Jonas?"

"The downfall of Alex Lawson's bank, and the panic in the town. Many people are ruined, and the banker is dead."

"Dead? dead?" stammered Ronan. "When did this occur?"

"A few days ago; and his wife and daughter have left the country, never to come back."

"Sinner" listened, aghast, to the crushing tidings, and pitied the minister, whose hopes were overthrown. Just as the beading cup was at his lips, it was stricken from his hand.

His suffering was manifest, as he asked, "When did they leave the village?"

"Day before yesterday," responded the coachman; "and he was killed the day before."

"Killed?"

"Yes, killed. Bill Gregory cracked him on the conk with a club, and he fell into the river. He never kem up again, an' he's pickerel-bait afore now," continued the whipman. "He owed Greg a heap o' rocks, and the cowman was gaffy with rage. He's in jail now fer doin' it, an' the lawyers is tryin' to unsnarl the bizness, an' save what they kin. They 'se bin two or three strangers from the East there fer twenty-four hours askin' fer Lawson. I reckon they want what's comin' to 'em, likewise."

Ronan was in a mental stupor, and the ride was a dreary one. When he reached home, and introduced McLaw to his family, as a friend of the Lawson family, his mother took him aside, and hurriedly related the gloomy facts, handing him a letter from Barbara, which ran:

"MY BELOVED,—Once more we are parted. Not by your misdoing, but by my misfortune. My father is dead; my mother is dishonored by the chicanery of Deynell, who has abased us at last. I would only pull you down were I your wife, and spoil your career. I can not be insincere; and, as you once asked me to give you up, I now ask you to renounce me. You will never see me more. Farewell! Your heart-broken

"BARBARA."

"Who has charge of all the disorganized affairs of the Lawson family now?" he asked his father, with forced calmness.

"Lawyer Blundell," was the answer.

In an hour, Beverly was shut in with the assignee, querying, "Where did the mother and daughter go?"

"To Scotland," was the reply. "They left all their interests here in my hands, and returned to their native land. They were both born there, and will not come back. As soon as they settle, Mrs. Lawson will send me their address, and I will report concerning the estate; but nothing will be left for them. All is forfeited. There will not be enough, by fifty thousand dollars, to meet Lawson's legal obligations."

"Had the mother much money when they left?" inquired Beverly.

"Not very much, I fancy," said Blundell. "She owned a few hundreds in cash, and that is what she is now using; sufficient to take them abroad, but not much more."

"What part of Scotland were they going to?"

"That they did not say. I suppose, however, they will naturally go among her people, somewhere in the Highlands."

Ronan recalled Lawson's chat about early days in Lochkirk, and resolved to seek them there, and share what he had with the broken family. He never loved his fiancée as now, and found a fierce joy in the thought that now he could make a great sacrifice for her.

"I will seek the world over till I find them," he said to "Sinner," as they talked the tragedy over.

"You will no doubt find them near my old

home in Lochkirk, and I will go with you. For thirty years I yearned to hear the bagpipes skirl where the clansmen meet. I would be happy to help Janet McCrea for the sake o' auld lang syne, now that she is a woeful woman. I have money enough yet, though I lost some by the Deynell affair."

Four days later, the two men took ship at New York for Liverpool, determined to find the Lawsons. McLaw was bubbling with the delight of homecoming, and dropped into the speech which he called "the braid tongue o' his kilted forbears."

"It's mighty," he assured Ronan, "the niver deein' love o' hame. Div ye ken I hear the burn wimplin' amang the knowes, and the pibroch fillin' the glen wi' 'Lochaber no More?' I'm proudfu' the day."

When half across the sea, he lilted the well-known tune, "O, came ye by Athol;" and Beverly found him sitting at the bow on the sixth day, looking eagerly landward, singing softly, "The Lass o' Gowrie."

"I can sniff the bracken an' the gorse," he said, when Ronan joked him about his new-found youth, "an' hear the dingin' in the Clachan! Aye, but the linn rins clear among the moss! An' the soond of Davit's psalms aye rises on the morn o' the Sawbath-day in the kirk aboon the brae! I shall tak off my bonnet among them soon. Aye, 't is bonnie to gang awa hame!"

The minister discovered that the farmer was saturated with sentiment, and patriotism crowned

him like a flame. Ronan was addressed as the "meenister," and assured they would find "Janet and the bit lass, never fear, in the Heelands amang the wild beauty o' the world, as it left the han' o' the Lord when newly made."

"Where else wad they gang?" he demanded. How he boasted, in harmless pride, of the small "land o' cakes" and its famous children, chanting a ballad from Burns, whom he called the bulbul of the heather!

"Div ye ken Robbie, the poemer?" he queried one day, as the gulls on slanting wings flew seaward to meet the steamer. "Niver gie a sermon without a wee bit o' his wark in it. The mon saw through the show o' things to the soul o' them. O!" he cried, trippingly—

'Caledonia, proud and wild,  
Fit nurse for a poetic child!'

"Tis a barren land compared to Egypt, a dull sky matched to Italy, but the whinstone birks produce men of pith and prowess;" and he paced the deck, hour after hour, whistling, "Who 'll be King but Charlie?"

When the long voyage of twelve days was ended, the pair hastened from Liverpool to Lochkirk as fast as steam could carry them, and arrived in the hill town at noon. They went to the only inn of the place, which is named "The Fleece," and had dinner. McLaw recognized the landlady as the daughter of the landlord of his youth, but she knew him not. Trying hard to show no emo-



tion, he asked if Henry McLaw, who was his only brother, lived in the village.

"Henry McLaw," quoth the hostess; "yes, sir; up the main street toward the north port, the last cottage but one."

Out they sallied, the old man shaking with suppressed feeling. He knew his father was dead, for he was buried before Ezra fled away. He reckoned his mother dead, for, if living, she would be eighty—beyond the allotted time of mortals. A soney dame stood by a garden gate, looking at the Americans.

The farmer halted. "Gude day, ma'am. Could ye show me the hoose o' Henry McLaw?" he inquired.

"Surely I can," she smiled; "keep on up the row, an' ye will nae miss it. That's it wi' the reek risin' in the lum."

He thanked her, and was about to proceed, when she said:

"If ye sek Henry McLaw, sir, ye should know his mither, who lives across the street."

"His mither? God be praised!" cried the Westerner. "I had no hope of such a benediction as this."

He crossed to the two-roomed cottage indicated, and Ronan noted how he trembled as he knocked on the door. A very aged woman came to the portal.

"Pardon me," he said, huskily. "Is your name Christie McLaw, widow of Donald McLaw?"

"Aye; that is my name," she responded, wondering.

"How many sons have you?"

"I hae but ane. I had anither, lang syne, but he is deed."

"When did he die, and where?" he faltered.

"I dinna ken that; but Ezra must be deed, or I had seen him in a' these years syne he left his home."

With all his pent-up affection, the man spake one word, "Mither!"

"T was well he put his arms around her, else she would have fallen heavily. Her sister, a few years younger, came running at call; and the two laid her on the couch. Soon she sat up, and looked at her visitor.

"It is Ezra. O my son, my son! back from the deed!"

A lad was passing the window. "Andrew," she called, "come here. Run and bid your fayther come here the now; rin fast, laddie; be hastefu'." And he sped away.

Ezra said to his mother, when Beverly was introduced and seated, "Let me reveal myself to Henry."

"Vera weel; but dinna o'erwhelm him, my son."

In a few moments a plain but well-favored man of fifty-eight entered, looking inquisitively from under shaggy brows at the newcomers.

"Excuse me, sir," said McLaw, rising, "for taking the liberty of a question. Do I look like any one you have known?"

Henry shook his head in the negative, when Ezra smiled; and the blood fled from the younger's cheeks.

"O mither!" he cried, "the grave has opened. It is our Ezra, our Ezra!" and he enfolded the wanderer in his fraternal arms.

When the story was told to the neighbors, who filled the house, Ezra asked, as quietly as possible, concerning the Lawsons.

"They are away in Western America, rich as cream; an' na ane hereabout kens their address. 'T is ten years since a letter was had from them, and all their kin are deed, except Janet's sister in Edinboro."

This was the sum of the information gathered; and small joy was in it for the importunate lover. Two days were spent there, in which Ezra purchased the whinstone cottage for his mother, and left her enough sovereigns and banknotes to keep her tidily all her days; and enriched his two nephews beyond their wildest dreams. Then they went to the Capital, and found Maggie, Mrs. Lawson's sister, a woman of fifty-two, whose circumstances were unfriendly in the extreme. She knew nothing of the objects of their search, and had not heard from them in many years. Almost discouraged, they went to Glasgow to search the ship offices, but got no trace of the mother and daughter.

It was the darkest Christmas morning Ronan had ever known, and he sat brooding in his room. All the world was full of the happiness of the Advent, and he was so wretched.

McLaw came in, finely dressed, for he delighted to wear costly attire and act the gentleman in his "ain countrie." He pulled off his gloves, tossed

them on the table, backed up against the grate, where a fire of sea-coals glowed, took the camelia from his buttonhole, and remarked:

"It keeps a' what a change has come ower me, an' you so fu' o' care. Ye dinna share the Christmas mood at a.' Never despair, my lad; we'll find them yet. I ken yer true hairt is sair the day."

"I am disheartened, Ezra."

"Dinna fash yoursel', Mister Ronan; by New Year ye may be eatin' shortbread wi' Barbara, happy as twa cruddlin' doves. Hogmanay is the cheeriest time in Scotia, an'—" he ran to the window. "Beverly, come here, quick. See the man an' woman goin' yonder? Div ye ken the pair. It is no other than Phil Ellis and his wife, as big as life. They're goin' off in a carriage."

"Sinner" was racing for a cab. A jehu came quickly at his summons. "Catch that vehicle with the baggage on top o' it, an' I'll give you five dollars—I mean a sovereign! Hurry now! Stir yourself!" In ten minutes the other conveyance was overtaken and stopped. McLaw ran to the door, and said: "How are you, Captain Ellis and Edith Satterlee? How are you townies?"

Greatly startled, Elliott took his hand, and said, "What brings you here?"

"'Tis a long story. Come to our hotel, and see Ronan, and talk about it."

Mrs. Elliott was willing, and soon they were all in Beverly's parlor, exchanging information.

"We are on our wedding tour," said the soldier, "and left Colonel Satterlee among his old

friends in Sussex, England, while we went over to Wales to see my folks. We had a pleasant time among them, and were starting to do the Highlands when you saw us. Now, what are you doing so far from home?"

"Our tale is not so charming as yours," replied Beverly. And he tersely related the main facts in his romance.

The bride and groom were deeply interested, and Elliott started as he heard Lawson's name. Jumping from his chair, he rang the bell, and said to the bell-boy:

"Tell the porter to get my baggage into room No. 18 immediately."

"It is there now, sir. Been there ten minutes."

Philip rushed into his apartment, unbuckled a bag, seized a little red book, and hurried back to the party. Almost breathless, he began: "You said the dead banker's name was Lawson?"

"Yes; Lawson."

Reading from the volume, he said: "Alexander Lawson, of Delhurst, Illinois; banker and attorney. Is this the man?"

"The very man," answered Ronan, in wonder.

"So ho," said Elliott, "here's a pretty kettle of fish! Will wonders never cease? 'This bangs Banagher,' as Downey would say. The whole intricate drama fits together like the works of a Nuremberg clock. It beats all I ever heard."

"What under the firmament are you driving at, Captain? Out with it," demanded McLaw.

"That's easy, dead easy!" chuckled the warrior. "Listen! Of course, you heard about the

oil excitement in the western part of Pennsylvania?"

"Yes," interjected Ronan, "and I heard you went there and mixed in the speculation."

"Right again," laughed Philip; "and I hit it, too. I put all my army savings into scrub-oak ground, and have increased my money six times over. I own half of a gusher on Oil Creek good for a hundred barrels a day. I'm no Coal-oil Johnnie; but I am on the sunny side of Easy Street sure as you're a foot high. But that's neither here nor there, men. The finest part of the story is this: Right in between two of the big spouters—the Monarch Well and the 'No Bottom'—which is the banner discovery of the whole district is a quarter section of land which all the investors are trying to buy. It is worth a thousand dollars an acre; and there are one hundred and sixty acres of it. Jeewhillikers, Ronan! Get up and shout, man! Why do n't you enthuse, you cold-blooded snail? Whoopee! What sort of a crustacean are you?"

"Hold your horses, Phil," said McLaw. "Why should he have hallelujahs over this matter? Where does he come in?"

"Right here, you lunkheads. That land is—or was—owned by Alex Lawson, your father-in-law-elect, or whatever it is. His widow owns it now. There have been several men in Delhurst trying to buy it. I sent one myself to get an option at the price I mentioned. They all came back, and said Lawson was dead; but he had not turned over this acreage to his creditors, probably because

he forgot all about it. The taxes are all paid. The title is clear; for I looked it up, and if Mrs. Lawson only knew it, she can get money enough to pay all her husband's debts and a big slice over. I'll give what I said for it quick, and pay the money in a week. There are two or three agents searching Scotland for her this very day, as I well know."

"This beats all," said "Sinner." "The fellow who said truth is stranger than fiction had his nut screwed on right, you bet."

"I remember," said Beverly, "hearing Lawson mention some land he owned in that vicinity; but he evidently considered it worthless. We must find them at once."

The truth about the Lawsons was simply this: To save money and rest the nerves, they had taken passage on a sailing vessel instead of a steamship; and, being some three weeks on the trip, had but landed in Greenock, headed for the home of a school-girl companion in the Highlands, who was Mrs. Lawson's closest friend. In her home she determined to hide awhile till plans could be laid for the future.

"With this tonic we can resume the hunt," mused McLaw, as he went to the street, to enjoy the rush of holiday-makers. "I think we had better go back to Edinboro again and interview that sister once more; perhaps she has some tidings now."

Next day, after they parted from the Elliotts, an advertisement was put in all the papers; but the Lawsons, to hide their scandal, were traveling un-

der an assumed name, and did not read the daily journals, so knew nothing of the pursuit.

For the twentieth time they loitered down to the shipping office, and learned that a vessel had come in from New York yesterday.

"Were there two persons—mother and daughter—on the ship, named Lawson?"

The clerk scanned the passenger list. "No Lawson," he said, "is on this paper."

"Did you notice such a pair?"

"I saw two women, looking like mother and daughter, come down the plank from the landing boat. There is the cabman who took them up town. I saw them go with him."

"Did you see them?" Beverly demanded of the listening jehu.

"Ya-as; I had 'em for fares, an' took 'em to Cassell's boarding-house. Old ledgy and young 'un."

"Get us there as quickly as possible," ordered Ronan. "Climb in, Ezra. Thank Heaven! we are near them at last."

"Do n't be too boisterous, Beverly. These folks have another name."

"I feel we are close to them. I am sure they are not far away now."

Swiftly they were hurried to Cassell's, and found it a clean, middle-class house, into which Ronan rushed.

"Have you a lady and daughter from America here?"—this to the florid dame who came to the door, a woman of bulbous fleshiness and great girth, who stood, with arms akimbo, and said, with



an expansive smile, which flowed down over both her chins:

"No, sir; we hain't; and that's the truth."

His heart trembled with despair. He was ashen pale, as he asked, "Have you had such a couple?"

"We had, yesterday; but they left the city last night."

"Do you know where they went?"

"No, sir; they did n't talk much about anything."

"Did you notice the cabman who took them to the station?"

"No, sir; it was pitch dark, and I did n't go to the door. He took their luggage with 'em."

The men went into the parlor.

"Please describe the two, if you can."

The woman did so quite graphically; and both men were sure they were on the right track.

"They wuz heavily veiled, an', I could see, wuz in deep trouble. The younger one eat no more 'n a bird, an' cryin' all the time. I seed 'er lookin' out the winder, an' heerd 'er a-weepin'. Her ma sez, 'Do n't cry, daughter.' An' she burst out mournin' like her heart was torn. Then they put arms around each other, an' cried together for a long time. Some women has so much to bear!"

Ronan drew a locket from his breast-pocket, opened it, and said: "Did the young woman look like the original of this picture? Does this face resemble her face?"

The matron looked, and declared: "It is her likeness, and no other."

Beverly's face was in his hands in uncontrollable grief. "Poor child! Poor child!" he sobbed. "Where are you now, bearing your heavy load, and I far from you! O that I could support you in this black hour!"

"Hoot, mon?" protested Ezra, melting into his environment and brushing suspicious moisture from the corner of his eye. "What havers have you the noo? Dinna fash yersel' an' deave the hoose wi' yere greetin.' I'll wager a scone the Lawsons will be delivered into your hand ere a fortnicht goes ower oor heeds. Ye maun'na be cast doon, laddie."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A Lover's Quest

"LET us have another talk with that woman in 'Auld Reekie.' It is not far, and she may know more now," argued "Sinner" in Glasgow the morning after their failure to intercept the much-wanted family.

"Why should she be wiser now than last week?" questioned Ronan.

"Well," resumed McLaw, "we are almost sure the Lawsons have lately landed. They may have gone there yesterday. Who knows?"

"All right," agreed Beverly. And back they went to Edinburgh. The sister had no news, and was surprised to know Janet and her child were in Scotland.

"Is there any friend she would be likely to seek?" queried "Sinner."

After some meditation the woman acknowledged there was a schoolmate in Lochkirk who was dearer to Janet than her own sister. "They were gey intimate ye ken, an' like twins in the ane cradle," she remembered.

"What is her name?" asked Beverly.

"She was born Allen, but her married name is Hillard—Kate Hillard."

"Where does she dwell?" was queried by Ronan.

"In Rosshire somewhere, but I dinna ken the name of the toon. 'Tis a sma' place. It may be my mon nicht know."

"Sandy, Sandy!" she shrilled, "come ben. Div ye ken the village where Kate Hillard lives the noo?"

He was a railway porter of intelligence and plain sense.

"I do," he answered, "richt weel. I billed some boxes there last week. It is Kinnairn, no other."

Thanking them for the clue, the two men went to seek rest, and early next morning were hurrying toward the Shire of Ross in the bleak North.

That very morning the Lawsons had reached Kinnairn by the post coach, and lodged at the town inn. The mother was ill, and scarcely able to enter the hostelry. She went at once to bed, her daughter attending her.

"We will not go to Mrs. Hillard's," she declared, "till we see if they want us and have room for us."

When the elder lady was comfortable, the younger put on her cloak to call on her mother's friend, whom she had never seen.

"Take this sampler, Barbara," requested her parent. "Kate will know it at once. She has one just like it, and we stitched them when we were lasses. The very threads are the same."

Putting it in her cloak pocket, the girl made her way to the house of the Hillards, not very far away. A demure woman, verging on old age, made

appearance at the door in response to her knock, and as she did so she said, genially, "Good morning. Come in."

Barbara entered, and took a chair which was offered her. By way of breaking the ice, she spread out the sampler on her lap, and was about to speak, when the matron laid it up in great excitement.

"How came ye by that, maiden? Ah! I ken ye noo! Ye are Janet McCrea's daughter. Ye hae her eyes as well as her smile. Wait a moment!"

Out of the room she went, and the visitor heard her ascending the stairs with flying feet. She rummaged in a chest in the attic, and brought down another sampler, precisely the same, excepting that one had worked in it the name "Kate Allen," while the other read, "Janet McCrea."

"How came ye by that, lass?" she demanded, smilingly, when the comparison was finished.

"Rightfully," answered Miss Lawson. "My mother gave it to me to-day."

"To-day!" cried the amazed matron; "an' where is she noo?"

"In the tavern there, and wants to see her old-time friend."

"Nae mair than I want to see her," responded the Scotch woman. And they were soon hastening to the inn.

The meeting of the twain in the "Shepherd's Arms" Hotel was deeply affecting; and in an hour the Lawsons were established in the roomy Hillard home; and the first smile Barbara had seen on her mother's face in a long, long time

broke through the cloud that had settled on her brow.

In the afternoon they slept, and after tea Kate got out the package of letters she had received from Janet in the long separation, and read them over, while the grown children listened; and Mr. Willard, a stonemason, sat looking on well pleased.

One of the early chronicles from the New World told that her husband, Alex, was discouraged, and would probably return to Scotland.

When Barbara heard this, it gave her a start, and she said, vehemently: "I am glad father changed his mind, and did not go back to his early home."

"Why?" said the man of the house. "Do you not love your native land?"

"With every drop of my blood," she answered, ardently. "I love it; but I love America, too; and life could never have been here what it was there."

She was thinking of her lover. All her life was with him, and seas rolled between.

When the letters were laid aside, they fell into converse on the past. The two friends recalled their youth. Scene after scene slipped from the camera of memory, and stretched before the inner eye. Once more the bluebells along the hedgerows mocked the bending skies, as through the flock-whitened meadows they wandered arm in arm. Once more the scarlet poppies floated high on the billows of ripened wheat. Again the moorhen called her scattered brood, and the hare leaped across the path through the rustling rye. Again

the shadow of the far-sailing eagle wavered across the gorse. They were girls again, at sweet sixteen, looking into the gloaming, and questioning what life would bring to them. And, behold! an incredible thing happened.

So elusive is the thread, so complex the pattern of the life that now is, that no imagery of the mind can surpass the plain truth in its inscrutable mystery. There surely is some occult power, some telepathic influence, by which one mind apprehends another, without visible correspondence; for even as Ronan and "Sinner" drew near the Hillard home, nigh to the end of their long quest, Mrs. Lawson was asking, "Was anything ever heard of Ezra McLaw?"

"You mean the man who shot Alex Lawson when they quarreled about you?" laughed Mrs. Hillard.

"Yes, the same. What became of him? Did he ever return to Lochkirk?"

"Never. We thought he fled to Australia, which was then drawing emigrants from Scotland. It is believed he went off with the feeling he had killed Lawson."

"It is too bad!" said the widow. "He never knew how my husband lied to save his reputation, and claimed his injury was accidental. He probably died under an assumed name, a haunted man, shunning the officers of the law. Mr. Lawson often said he wished he could find Ezra, to clear up the matter. He said that he provoked the quarrel, and, McLaw being impetuous, the mischief was done—"

Rap! rap! rap! upon the door; and Mr. Hillard opened it, to see two men on the step.

"Is Mrs. Lawson here?" asked "Sinner."

"She is, sir; come in," said Hillard.

As Ronan entered, he saw Barbara staring at the door, and in a moment he ran to her; not soon enough, for the overdrawn nerves snapped, and she fell heavily. He lifted her gently, whispering tender names, and followed the mother to a couch in an adjoining room. When her eyes opened, she seemed dazed, and said, as startled, "Where am I?" trembling like a leaf.

"You are safe, dear; safe at last! I have crossed the sea to find you. We will never part again."

Then, rising, he said: "Mrs. Lawson, do you know this man? Look at him closely, carefully."

She stared at the tall stranger, whose face was immovable as bronze.

"Wonder!" she cried, trembling as with a chill. "It is Ezra McLaw, is it not?"

"It is," said "Sinner;" "and you are Janet McCrea. And this," he said, "is Kate Allen. I remember seeing you at Lochkirk thirty years ago."

The astonished family looked on and listened, after Barbara was at ease, to the story of McLaw's career.

"Until recently," he declared, "I thought Alex Lawson dead by my hand, and bore that burden in sorrow many a year. I heard him assume the blame and tell the others he had shot himself; and as they said he was in death's grip, I went away, believing I had destroyed a noble man. Not till



I met Beverly in Millbank, where he was once pastor, and related my story to him, did I learn that Alex was alive. I was making preparations to return to the Highlands and expiate my crime and purge my soul, when the glad truth came to me. I then went West with Ronan to meet your husband, but arrived too late. He was dead, and you were gone. We have searched for you ever since. We are overjoyed to find you, Janet."

Barbara entered the room on Ronan's arm, and Ezra said, exultingly: "O Janet, she is the living image of you at her age. It brings it all back again."

"Now," said Beverly, "a part of the story remains untold. I desire to tell it."

"Go on," said the widow, curiously. "I suppose one surprise will tread on another's heels. After this night I am fit to believe anything."

"You believed your husband died insolvent, did you not?" began Ronan.

"I did. He was deeply involved in Deynell's failure," she answered.

"You are mistaken entirely. He owned some land in the oil regions, bought for a song, and now it is worth more than enough to pay all his debts and clear his name of dishonor."

Both Barbara and her mother were speechless for very ecstasy. "Are you sure—sure—sure?" Mrs. Lawson asked, when she could find words.

"Beyond all cavil. No one dare gainsay it. Let your soul spread its wings. I will stake my existence on what I have told you."

Barbara walked over to the cottage organ, sat

down on the stool, and put her fingers on the keys. Ronan caught the first note, and sang, with full utterance, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

When silence lay again on the happy group, he spoke once more: "You will go with us to-morrow to Glasgow. There we will meet Mr. Elliott, who will manage the sale for us; and we will return to Delhurst and pay all your debts. The old home will be yours again, and the old church will have a wedding, provided Barbara is ready to name the day."

The following morning they went southward, and called Philip Elliott to town by a telegram. In two days he arrived, and, his wife desiring to go home, they left the Colonel in Sussex, and agreed to sail westward together.

In the hotel he met another oil man in pursuit of the Lawsons, who said he would like to buy the widow's tract of land at one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, and pay ten thousand down, on the nail for a thirty-days' option on it.

They had to wait two days for a steam vessel to New York; and the town never held a happier party.

"Sinner" particularly was rejuvenated; for he had the daily company of his youthful sweetheart. His seamed face was wholly spiritualized by recent experiences; and he was so attentive and unweariable in his devotion to her that Beverly surmised he might win Janet McCrea yet. Even as the tide follows the moon, so he followed her.

One afternoon, as he and Ronan went down the main street, taking a view of the sights, he saw a sign of a large white-goods firm. "Say, Bev, by cricky, that's the place where my brother Henry's boy works. He told me when we were in Lochkirk, and I promised to see him. Let us go in."

"Very good," assented the preacher.

They inquired for Wallace McLaw, and were sent to the fourth floor, where "Sinner" found his nephew handling balmoral-striped goods in a dim light and stuffy atmosphere. He had the youth called, and soon introduced himself.

The young man was delighted to meet his uncle. His father had written of the promised visit, and he was expecting it. They talked for an hour, and "Sinner" gave him ten five-pound notes as he left him, saying, "Lay that by for a nest egg."

Going downstairs, Beverly said: "Ezra, did you notice how pale and sickly he seemed? That fellow is not rugged. He needs a change."

"I did; and it pained me," he replied.

"Why not take him to America with you?" challenged Ronan. "You have no kinfolk there. It is the land of opportunity. Give the boy a chance to make a man of himself."

"Let us go back," said McLaw, as a light kindled in his eyes. He called his young relative, and said, "How much do you get in wages here?"

"Four shillings a day," was the answer.

"Are you married?" was asked.

"No, sir; I have no thought of it."

"How would you like to go to America?" blurted out McLaw.

"To America, sir! Lord, bless me! 'Tis the dream of my life. I'll go there some day, if I'm spared," Wallace answered, resolutely.

"Well, get ready to go now. We will sail to-morrow."

"Sail to-morrow! Uncle, do you really mean to take me?"

"Sure as fate," said Sinner. "Go to the office, and get your wages. Say good-bye to your friends. I will wait."

The stature of the man increased three inches, apparently; and he tossed a burden from him, as he straightened his sunken shoulders and went among his comrades, calling, eagerly:

"Good-bye, boys; I am going to America. To America to-morrow!" He fairly beamed with rapture, and all his shopmates envied him, some whispering: "We will see you there some day. We will overtake you, Wallace."

On the street "Sinner" left Ronan and went off to purchase a full outfit for the youth; and no one could declare which was more uplifted; yet Millbank had heard this man declare that his motto was, "Compassion is commendable, but cash is indispensable."

They all sailed in due time, and, after a stormy passage, landed on Manhattan Island, and spent a few days in the great city.

The women were now in good health and high hopes. In Pittsburg, which was boiling with excitement, the sale of the Lawson quarter-section

was consummated, subject to court restrictions; and when the deed was put in escrow in the bank, with a bond duly executed, signed by mother and daughter, half the purchase price of two hundred thousand dollars was paid; and back to Delhurst went Beverly, Mrs. Lawson, and her daughter.

The little town rattled with excitement as they rode home in the coach; and the news ran from lip to lip with electric speed. The creditors and their agents were summoned, and, being glad to accept full cash payment and surrender the several properties, the old home was soon secured to them again; and the first money paid by Mr. Blundell, as Mrs. Lawson's agent, was to Mrs. Bailey, with interest in full.

The others were all satisfied in due course, and the village had a sort of jubilee. The old heads said it outwent anything in the history of the country; and the young folks began their preparations for attending Beverly's and Barbara's bridal, which was expected, as the stage-driver said, "to make all the did-sizzled ole weddin's ever helt in this corner o' the moral vineyard look tackeyer 'en a tinker's overalls, an' more sorrowful 'an a week-old waffle. Delhurst," he declared, cracking his whip like a gunshot, "is goin' to git on her new frock, an' red up the settin'-room; an' the hilaryousness will be six foot deep on a level, thar er tharabouts. You hyar my bazoo? I'll keep it a-tootin' an' a-trillin' till the nupshulls is done an' the shiverree is over, or bust my biler. I will that."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### The End of the Story

**H**E who walked, on the first day of March, up the main street of Delhurst, past the hotel, with its broad veranda, swept with freezing blasts, where idlers loll all summer long, watching the quoit-players pitching horseshoes, and waiting for the stage-coach to bring the scant mail and a few passengers, would have noticed, as he passed the town pump, hung with icicles, where a boy, with hand over the nozzle, was wont to force a thin stream into the air through a gimlet-hole in the upper part of the spout, that Ronan's smithy was closed; and the hostler at the red barn, siapping his hands, encased in striped mittens, against his sides, could have told him that Beverly, the blacksmith's son, was to espouse that day, in the church farther along the thoroughfare, the daughter of Lawson, the dead banker.

Indeed, the squeaking sleighs, laden with ground pine and bright holly leaves, all halting at the white-painted sanctuary, with the smoke climbing straight into the keen air, indicated that preparation was being made within for the rites that afternoon.

With laughter and jests the young friends of the bride were decorating the plain, rudely-furnished room; loops of evergreen were hung on window lintels, and a canopy of laurel hung over the spot where the vows were to be spoken. An apple-cheeked girl was practicing the wedding march on the small organ, while her beau, with a remark meant only for her, added a rosier blush to her mantling face. The great wood-stove crackled and wheezed as if it knew the secret well enough, and actually tried to roar a bass accompaniment to the tune that rinsed, with its sweet melody, the dingy tabernacle.

Barbara was at the hotel when the big coach rolled in about eleven o'clock, with Barney at her side; and, as a fine rolling-chair for an invalid was handed down from the top of the stage, she said, "Now, Mr. Foley, wheel that chair after me."

"The Minty" did as requested, and they came soon to a house surrounded by trees near the main highway. To this she enters, and Barney follows with the chair.

In the one living-room, all scrupulously clean, was a bed bearing a pale girl, whose face was lined with marks of pain. A discouraged woman, prematurely old, sat knitting by a window.

"Good morning, Elsie," cried the visitor.

"Good morning to you, Barbara," she answered in the tremulous voice of suffering. "I have just finished your veil, see!" And she shook out a fleecy tissue across the footboard of her couch.

"Is n't it exquisite?"

"Yes, indeed it is," replied Miss Lawson; "and

every stitch of your fingers has helped make it so. It looks as light as woven air. But Elsie, do you know what this is?" pointing to the chair.

"Yes," said the invalid. "I know you have bought me a rolling-chair. In summer I can go out. I can wheel it with my hands. It cost a lot of money, Barbara. Why did you do this for me?"

"O, I feel so happy myself that I want every one to be glad on my bridal day. I wish I could chirk up the whole round world. That's all I wish. O, if my father were only here!" The unbidden moisture filmed her eyes as she spoke.

"You'd do it, too, if enny one could," said the mother. "Elsie's heart is goin' like a fluttermill now. She as't me jest about an hour ago how she could git along when you went away from hyar with Bev Ronan. Said she bet no one would keer enough about her to come in and say 'howdy,' much less take her out ridin' in summer time. She's nigh deestracted about it."

"That is why I got this chair, Mrs. Bailey. And six young men and several young women here promised me that next summer Elsie shall have many an outing. Moreover, Mr. Foley here is coming at half-past two o'clock to wheel her to the church to my wedding. I want her there in the Amen corner, where she can see it all," declared Miss Lawson, and, turning to the sufferer, she went on, archly, "There won't be any ceremony unless you are there, Elsie; and you will get a wiggling if you keep the procession waiting."

The cripple's face was lightened wondrously: "You're the beatenist hand at doin' clever things



that ever lived. Ef sight of folks called Christians wuz knee-high to you, they 'd be well off," spoke the mother. "We never could have skinned along and kep' Harry at college, on'y fer you. Elsie 's got a gourd half full o' gold-pieces you giv her fer birthdays and Chrismusses and sich. She was a heftin' 'em this mornin' and sayin' they 'd give her a nice funeral some day. She can't never feel to find another sich a friend as you 've been to her more 'n nothin'. She feels fainty-like when she thinks o' it, and skeered."

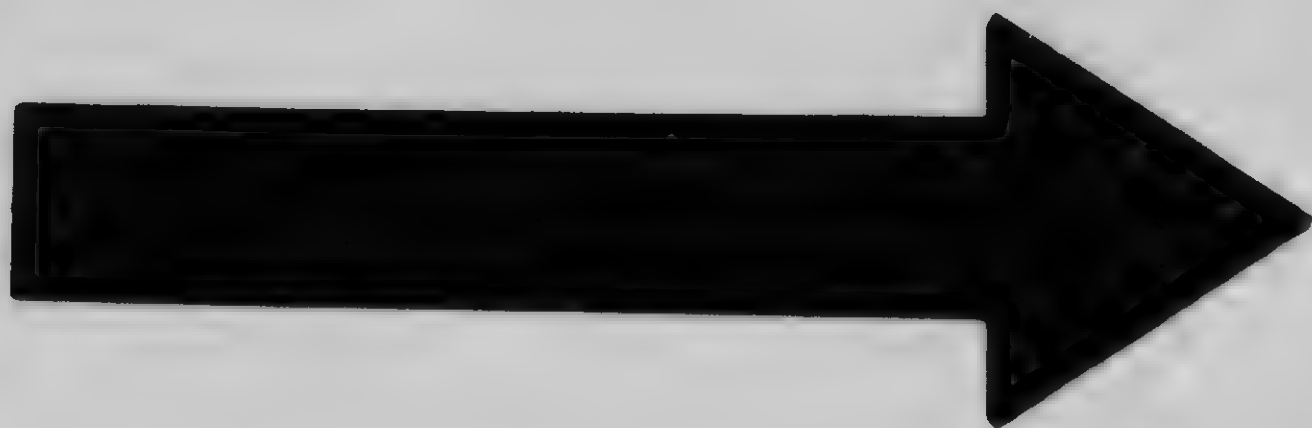
Barbara laughed cheerily. "Never fear, Mother Bailey. Elsie and I were friends at school long before she was injured, and will be as long as we live. Mr. Ronan will not hinder me in this work, and I will write to her often."

"No," rejoined Mrs. Bailey. "Bev is free-handed hisself. There was never a mean bone in his body. I 've knowed him always, an' he 's kum in hyar often. We shall miss you both sure enough."

An hour before the appointed time the church was filled, and the women were enjoying what one housewife called "a good dish o' talk," discussing the bride and her attire, the groom and his prospects.

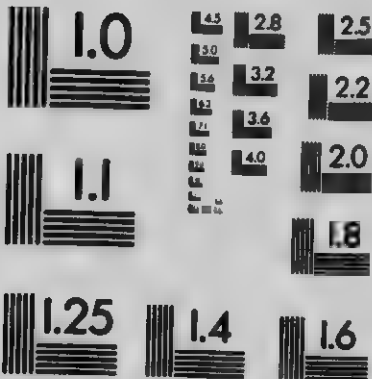
"They 'll do well, never fear," said one rubicund matron. "Barbara 's got good looks an' good nature an' good sense; an' Beverly loves her harder 'en a mule kin kick; so I say, they 'll git forward smart enuff."

No one disputed this; and they grew impatient waiting. The men told each other how many



# MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



**APPLIED IMAGE Inc**

1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, New York 14609 USA  
(716) 482 - 0300 - Phone  
(716) 288 - 5989 - Fax

cows they were milking and how many turkeys they sold lately. The wives debated churning, making doughnuts and cup-cake, and one was in the middle of—

"The quilt was really scrumptious, forty-four log-cabin blocks, with enough pieces to——"

Jingle! jingle! came the clamoring sleigh-bells, and the bridal party drove up to the chapel.

Up the aisle they came, slowly, as the music drew them on. At the altar stood the prison chaplain, whom Ronan had invited, and the aged pastor of the Church. Elsie, in her new chair in the corner, had the chief joy of her uneventful life. Few such well-matched pairs have made the responses in the grand old service. More than one maiden sighed with longing, as true manliness and modest beauty stood there, to be mated for life, "to have and to hold from this day forth;" and, when they were sealed in wedlock, the grave and reverend seniors agreed that a bridegroom more gallant, a bride more bewitching, had never graced old Delhurst church. The music broke forth again as he led her to the door, and they were driven to the Lawson home, where revelry ran high all evening and far into the night. Indeed, it was cock-crow when the last group left.

Phil Elliott and his wife had come all the way from Millbank to attend the ceremony, and after the supper, Beverly said:

"Did you ever unravel the mystery of that ghost in the mill, of which you told us in the prison?"

"Yes," chuckled the Captain; "when we got

the rake-hellers holed up in that underground domicile, I recognized one of them as one of the four in the mill. He told me Moulton's sister, who lived there, tried to scare him out of the business by playing the ghost at his rendezvous; and her lover, who was with her, saw me spying around. When I was on the wheel, he opened the head-gate with an iron bar, and swept me into the river. They told the men about it afterward, and declared they had got rid of an eavesdropper by the water-cure. So they had, for a time."

The next day, "Sinner" told Ronan he had decided to double Laura's bequest, and asked a lawyer to draw up a deed of gift, conveying thirty thousand dollars to endow the Mission, which his daughter's legacy was to build. He also promised that all his remaining property should, at his death, go to the same purpose.

One who has visited the well-known McLaw Mission in that great Eastern city will remember the memorial window in the western end of the building, over the pulpit of the auditorium; and, if there in the afternoon, will recall how the declining sun touches it with roseate splendor and floods the room with subdued radiance. At the base of its many-tinted and harmonious panels is the line, "In memory of Laura McLaw;" and under it the text, "She hath done what she could."

The institution is a hive of busy helpers of mankind, and is now acknowledged to be the model Mission Church of America. Some friends argued with Ronan to have him build a fine church, and

use his great eloquence in the service of those who were socially higher; but he said:

"The Master called his Church the light of the world. It should go, therefore, where the darkness is deepest. The place for a lighthouse is knee-deep in the surf, where the reefs are cruel and sharp, to warn the sailors off the sunken ledges, and beckon the mariners into the safe harbor. Moreover," he declared, "we must be true to the purpose of the woman who built, and the man who endowed the Church. The prosperous people have no lack of Shepherds. We will abide here."

He is old now, but his eye is not dimmed, nor his force abated; and visitors to the East often tell, on their return, of the indescribable witchery of his speech; how they were toned up by his dauntless faith, and of the imperishable love given him by the people around. They also assert that sometimes, when his head is tossed back in the stress of some burning appeal, the white hair, falling aside, shows the scar above his temple, made by Mr. Lawson, on the return from the rescue of his wife.

She is the happiest of all women, his earnest helpmeet in every endeavor; and most of his success is due to her gentle and unfaltering consecration.

For many years they had two annual visitors. One was Foley, who, with his share of the island treasure, bought an oyster craft on the Chesapeake. He often took the sturdy boy, Beverly the second, on his knee, and told him about his clipper-built catboat "heelin' up the bay wid a

bone in her teeth," and liked nothing better than to vex the lad, till his touchy temper exploded in childish fury.

One day, when his teasing became unbearable, the young fellow gave him a slap, that displayed to him what he called "a shimmer o' stars," and made tears rise in his eyes; whereupon he beamed on him approvingly, and exclaimed:

"Glory be! I dinnaw but that gossoon is the makin' o' anither mawdern A-pall-us!"

The other who came yearly was "Sinner" McLaw, who usually spent a month, enjoying the work in his quiet way, well pleased to see so many reclaimed. He seldom took part in any service, but was always present when in the city.

One afternoon there was a small meeting for those seeking a higher life. Beverly invited them to speak briefly, and a goodly number responded.

McLaw rose, and said, in a low tone: "I feel I am nearing the heavenly home. I am only waiting for the chariot."

Then he sat down. The sinking sun, shining through the memorial window, bathed them all in its mellow glow. He sat looking into the pictured crystal with steadfast gaze, as if seeing the invisible. His head fell over on the man next to him, who, gazing in his countenance, saw that his spirit had flown, and the aged man had been laureated. So noiseless was his departure that, while they communed with one another, he had heard and answered the call of One who said, forgivingly, unto another sinner in a far-off land, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

